



Article Reprint

THE ALMASTY – YETI OF THE CAUCASUS*

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Students of prehistory build their science on a range of discoveries, the most notable of which involve a practically complete skeleton or bone fragments. In the coming years, are they for once going to observe directly a hominid, a surviving fossil from prehistory? The *almasty*, or wildman of the Caucasus, may be the subject of this remarkable observation. Different from the *yeti* of the Himalaya, which is only a *Gigantopithecus*, the *almasty* of the Caucasus is a hominid which already possesses certain traits of Neanderthal man. Formerly rather well known to the inhabitants of the region, who have numerous recollections of their encounters with these wildmen, it appears unfortunately to be on the way to extinction. Russian archeologists who are trying actively to observe it have not yet succeeded in approaching it. This exceptional prospect is going to cause specialists in evolution to hold their breath over the coming years, and perhaps one day will reward amply their wait.

An investigation, carried on over the past several years among various peoples of the Caucasus, has made possible the assembly of a file containing more than 500 statements by witnesses, who claim to have observed hominoid creatures personally, sometimes for lengthy periods of time. These hominoids are described as bipedal, covered with hair, and having no language. They are described in the local languages as “men of the woods” or “wildmen.” An analysis of the description of the “wildmen” discloses very precise anatomical, ecological and ethological criteria. This evidence, as well as certain observations collected in the field, indicate that these reported observations are real and are well founded in fact.

Reports in the Soviet press, in 1956, of Anglo-American expeditions searching in the Himalayas for bipedal, hairy creatures, termed “*yetis*,” gave rise unexpectedly

to a multitude of letters from the mountainous provinces of the USSR, addressed to scientific authorities and to editors of major publications. Schoolteachers, physicians, shepherds, military personnel, among others, all were astonished at the interest shown in the foreign-led expeditions, whereas in the USSR itself similar anthropomorphic creatures, well known to the writers of the letters, apparently evoked no interest on the part of Soviet science. Such literature, of course, is not in the slightest capable of arousing scientists. Chance, however, decreed that Professor R. Porchnev would have a look at the matter. Historian, philosopher and humanist of world-renown (Doctor *Honoris causa*, among others, from the University of Montpellier), Porchnev's attention was caught by the simplicity of the reports and by the realism of the descriptions, all of which agreed despite the diversity of their origins.

**Editor's Note:* This article was originally published in *Archéologia* 269:24-43, June 1991, in French. It was translated into English by Dr. Edward Winn, March 1993. Much of Dr. Koffmann's original publications have remained relatively inaccessible to English-speakers. Portions have been summarized and restated by such authors as Tchernine, Shackley, or Bayanov. While this article was written for a semi-popular publication, this translation, provides fuller access by Anglophones to Dr. Koffmann's own discussion of her seminal field research. Therefore, it is deemed appropriate to reprint this classical work, with the author's permission, in the RHI.

The energy and authority of Professor Porchnev were sufficient to overcome the resistance, and even the indignation, of the academic community. Brought to the notice of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, the ensuing debate led to the creation in 1958, under the auspices of the Presidium, of a Commission to study the problem of the "Snowman", and to the organization of a research expedition to the Pamir. Responsibility for this expedition was assigned to the Botanical Institute of the Academy, which had its own scientific base in that region, and the personnel of which claimed to be informed about the existence of strange anthropomorphs. The USSR was thus the only country to attempt a serious investigation of this unusual problem.

The Commission mounted a series of intensive activities: bibliographical research, which was to turn up numerous descriptions of these creatures by naturalists and explorers, from numerous places and points in time; alerting of Chinese authorities, to whom were sent a number of reports concerning their Western territories, and who reacted favorably to such an extent that a joint Sino-Soviet expedition was projected for 1959; cooperation with the Academy of Sciences of Mongolia, of which two leading members had been studying the problem since the 1920s, as well as with Western zoologists who had reported the existence of *yetis* or who had led Himalayan expeditions (Drs. B. Heuvelmans and G. Russell in France, I. Sanderson in the USA); annual publication of monographs in which were presented, without modification and without commentary, reports as they had arrived from different parts of the world and over a wide range in time.

The expedition to the Pamir ended in failure. Conceived too hastily in the first flush of enthusiasm, the 1958 expedition of the Academy of Sciences, of which I was the physician, was premature. This failure was vigorously exploited

by the powerful "opposition," and the Commission broke up slowly of its own accord by 1960.

Thereafter, research was in the hands of several individuals who were totally deprived of all material, technical and financial means, a situation which is singularly difficult in the USSR, where all activity is structured by the State. Nonetheless, the Academy of Sciences agreed to publish under its seal, in 1963, the voluminous monograph "*Current State of the Problem of Relict Hominoids*," in which Porchnev set forth the analysis and the synthesis of the exceptional documentation, collected up to that time, on these bipeds of hominid appearance and distributed over several regions of the globe, and advanced the hypothesis of their paleoanthropic nature.

It was at that point that the matter of the Caucasus arose. In November 1958, the Presidium of the Academy received an official visit from a physician with the rank of lieutenant colonel. This person, Dr. V. Karapetian, considered it his duty to report an anomalous sighting which he had made personally, and for which the recent publications finally had supplied an interpretation. In the winter of 1941, in Daghestan, he had been called to examine a creature of human appearance, male, covered with thick fur, and described as having a brutish expression, which had been intercepted by a military patrol.

Shortly afterward, a similar report was submitted by the Chief Game Warden of the Republic of Daghestan, K. Leontiev. In August 1958, in the high mountains, he had sighted very briefly an identical creature. He described in great detail its footprints, which had been left in a snowfield.

Almost simultaneously, we discovered an analogous report. Dating from 1899, it came from an illustrious zoologist, Professor Satounine, whose works on the fauna of the Caucasus are considered to be the most exhaustive to this day. In the course of an expedition to the Eastern Caucasus, he reported

having observed briefly a “wild woman, covered with hair.”

It is to be noted that all three of these persons are foreign to the Caucasus, and are especially well qualified to judge zoological phenomena. Nonetheless, these first Caucasian communications gave rise to profound contention and divergences of view. The very idea of the survival into the twentieth century, in the midst of swarms of human beings, of an unknown hominoid population appeared absurd and totally unacceptable. The search for the “snowman” thus took on an aspect of the ridiculous.

As an alpinist and veteran of the Battle of the Caucasus in 1942, I felt especially concerned by this disastrous turn of events. In August 1959, I left for the southern slope of the Great Caucasus, on the border of Daghestan, with the intention of explaining and putting to rest these disputes. When I returned to Moscow a month later, I had collected the verbal reports of 40 witnesses who had personally observed the “Men of the Forest”. The search for relict hominoids in the Caucasus led me, on foot, on horseback, and by motorcycle, through practically all of its republics: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Daghestan, Checheno-Ingushetia, Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai, Cherkassia, the territories of Stavropol and of the Kuban. This research has been pursued for many years.

Although at the beginning I did not believe in the existence of these hominoids unknown to science, I was brought progressively to change my opinion thanks to the results of an extensive investigation in various segments of the Caucasian population and to certain material evidence: nests, food scraps, excrements, and footprints.

THE CAUCASUS

Extending from the steppes of southern Russia to the great plateaus of Anatolia, Armenia and Iran, the Caucasus occupies the totality of the

isthmus separating the Black Sea from the Caspian Sea, and covers an area of 440,000 km², or about four-fifths the area of France.

A part of the great geosyncline which was to give rise to the chain of mountains running through our hemisphere from Spain to the Himalayas, the Caucasus has shared in its tumultuous destiny. In turn, a tropical archipelago bathed by the warm Tethys; it is to these eras that it owes the endemism of a part of its present flora and fauna. The rise of the Lesser Caucasus in the Miocene transformed the archipelago into a peninsula, where there flourished the fauna of the Near East, as well as that of Central Asia, the Mediterranean Basin and Eastern Europe. The Quaternary, drying out the remains of the Tethys, opened the way to the Caucasus for boreal flora and fauna.

The principal geomorphological element of the region is the Great Caucasus, which traverses the isthmus on a diagonal as an immense and uninterrupted barrier 1200 km in length, 150 to 200 km in width and rising 3000 to 5000 m in altitude. Its culminant point is Mt. Elbruz, an extinct volcano rising to 5642 m. This barrier is made up of several chains, sometimes running parallel and sometimes cutting across one another, which surround deep depressions, accessible only with great difficulty, and which are true microcosms.

The name of Northern Caucasus, or Ciscaucasia, is given to the region of the gentle southward rise of the northern slopes of the Great Caucasus, with its temperate and humid climate. The name of Transcaucasia is given to the abrupt slope and the part of the isthmus south of the great mountain chains, with its subtropical climate.

The extraordinary diversity of the Caucasian region - its massive mountains, deserts of sand in which camels roam, inaccessible canyons, thick northern forests and veritable jungles, cuestas with their vertiginous cliffs, continental plateaus, the coastal riviera of the Black Sea, marshes of the Colchis of antiquity – is rivalled

only by that of its fauna and flora. To mention only the most common animals – bear, fox, wolf, lynx, wildcat, wild boar, ibex, chamois, stag, all coexist with the tiger (unfortunately, practically extinct today), leopard, hyena, jackal, saiga, gazelle, aegagrus, porcupine, etc. Among the paleontological forebears there should be mentioned a tertiary anthropoid monkey, the *Udabnopithecus* (end of the Miocene, beginning of the Pliocene).

The mosaic of the innumerable Caucasian peoples – Strabon already had counted more than three hundred – makes of the Caucasus one of the most complex regions of the world, ethnologically speaking. Inhabited since the Paleolithic era, theater of the earliest civilizations (Urartu, 10th century B.C.), the Caucasus was above all and for millennia the arena of bloody strife among Paleocaucasians, Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Romans, Parthians, Ottomans, Byzantines, etc., whereas at the foot of its northern slopes there swooped down upon one another Cimmerians, Scythians, Alans, Huns, Khazars, Mongols and who knows how many others.

Each wave of assailants exterminated in blood and fire the preceding populations, of which a few isolated remnants escaped to live on in the fastness of the high mountains where, some decades later, they were joined by the survivors of a new massacre perpetrated by yet a third invader. Autochtons, Semites, Iranians, Indo-Europeans, Mongols, Pagans, Sabaeans, fire-worshippers, lamaists, followers of Judaism, Christians and Muslims all found themselves mixed together in this Tower of Babel of languages (Daghestan alone Counts more than forty) without, however, ever seeming to interfere with one another.

In spite of this multiplicity of origins, the generalized and very expressive type of Caucasian can be recognized at once. By way of essential traits he has, against a background of ill-controlled emotivity and spontaneity, an extreme simplicity in human relationships and acceptance of the world, all

marked with a sense of justice and dignity, a limitless hospitality, and a veneration of aged people and of all guests, and the whole associated with much insouciance, versatility and ingenuity. In fact, the Caucasian peoples all are marked with the same seal of traditions and common archaic beliefs, jealously preserved or imposed by conditions of existence identical to those of small feudal societies subsisting essentially on alpine stock-farming and brigandage.

Soviet power conferred on all of these ethnic groups an administrative structure, a cultural apparatus and an alphabet (only Armenia and Georgia had their own literature), while at the same time abolishing and punishing severely the abduction of women, blood vengeance, warlike incursions with the theft of livestock, and ethnic confrontations. How difficult it is to renounce the customs of the fathers, especially when the police, as children of their people, are so understanding of the situation! Even today, on many matters the Caucasian holds the innocent view of simple people.

EYEWITNESS REPORTS

Dr. Koffmann has available the verbal statements from more than 500 witnesses, who stated that they had observed these creatures personally. Covering a wide range of nationalities, age, educational level and social standing, her informers are for the most part simple men: Shepherds, farmers, hunters. Their knowledge of nature and their faculties of observation are beyond reproach. Reports obtained second-hand, were innumerable, but are not included in this list.

It should go without saying that the name of the creatures described varies according to the language of the area. However, it is always to be translated as “man of the woods” (*mechae-adame* in Azerbaijani, *tskhiss katsi* in Georgian, *agatch-kichi* in Karachai, etc.), “wildman”, or “hairy man.” She uses the Kabardian “*almasty*,” which is familiar to her

since it was Kabardino-Balkdria especially, at the foot of Mt. Elbruz, which served as the base for her research.

The reports obtained vary in extent and value, depending upon the circumstances of the sighting, its duration, the distance, the ambient light, the interest shown by the observer, his state of fear or curiosity, and the posture and the behavior of the *almasty*. One witness would be struck by a secondary detail and would come back to it persistently, while dismissing essential points. The next stressed a completely different aspect, and a third was able to examine these creatures at leisure and repeatedly, to approach them, and to give them food.

Here are some examples of reports chosen from among the hundreds which the author possesses. Taken separately, each of these communications is without value, but, assembled together by hundreds they constitute a file, the existence of which is a fact.

THREE ALMASTYS HIDING UNDER A ROCK

Story told by Koumychev Talib, 67 years, Kabardian, one of the most respected elders of the village of Kammenomost, in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria (the text of the report has been abridged).

It was probably in 1930, or 1931, or 1932, in June or at the end of May, when our cattle left for alpine pastures of Elbruz. I was chief of the group. We had left to inspect the herds with the veterinarian. Well, rain had surprised one of my sherpherds, Zagoureev Chaghir, very high up on the slopes, and he had gone to take refuge under a rocky overhang. When he approached it, there were three *almastys* sitting under it. Chaghir was a little frightened, but as the rain was then falling much harder, he decided to stay there anyway, except staying at a distance from them. They looked at one another. Then, the

rain stopped and Chaghir came down to the farm. He did not say anything to anyone.

Very early in the morning, I was awakened by cries, a tremendous noise, and I saw that the shepherds were running to assemble their herds and were taking the cattle down the valley. "Why are they leaving?" I asked. "There are *almastys* under the rock, up there."...At that moment Chaghir declared, "It's true, there are three *almastys* sitting up there, I saw them yesterday evening." I was then really angry... I said to Chaghir, "You're an idiot. You were frightened by a bush." "No, said Chaghir, I saw them." "Well, why didn't you tell anyone?" "Because the old people have warned – when you see an *almasty* for the first time, if you tell anyone about it, you will get a bad headache. Well, for me, it was the first time that I had seen one." I continued not to believe all this. They said to me, "OK, go ahead, go see for yourself."

We are about 10 to 15 people making a half-circle around that rock. We stayed there until dinnertime. Some went away, and others came up. Three *almastys* were seated under the overhang, two of medium size, and the other bigger. The one which was the biggest was in the middle. They were sitting on rocks, facing us, hunched over, with their heads down. From time to time they raised their heads slightly, and looked at us from under their brows. Their heads were very ugly, not nice at all. They resemble a human face a little, but the nose is shorter and flattened. The eyes are slanted and reddish. The cheeks are very prominent, like those of a Mongol or a Korean, but more so. The lips are thin. The lower jaw is receding, as though cut on a bias.

The hair is long, like that of a woman, and tangled. The entire body is covered with shaggy hair, resembling that of the buffalo. In some places this is long (torso, chest) and in other places it is shorter (arms, legs). The big one had the chest of a man. The others had the breasts of a woman, but extremely long and covered with hair. The hair was very dirty. The stink

was so strong that we could not stand it. The odor resembled that of wild flax, when it grows thickly.

Once, the one seated on the right mumbled something. I did not see their hands clearly, as they were held between their legs. The legs are rather short and bowed. The foot is like that of a man, but more spread out. All were wearing, wrapped around their waists, an old piece of a shepherd's cape.

A young shepherd proposed to throw a lasso around one of them and bring it into the village. But, all the others cried out that it is forbidden, that they must not be harmed, and that they must not be disturbed. I watched them from a distance of 3-4 m, and I even approached to within about 1 m. Did I touch them? I should say not! If you touch them, as Allah is my witness, you could no longer eat with your hands afterward, they are so dirty, stinking and repulsive. I remained about 2 hours. When I left, other shepherds were arriving.

...I have heard my father recount that they suckle on cows.

FANCIERS OF HEMP SEEDS AND WATER-MELON SEEDS

Story told by Kochokoev Erjib, 70 years, Kabardian, inhabitant of Stary Cherek.

Before the war, there were many *almastys* around our area, even masses of them, one can say. Today, evidently, very few are encountered. I am somewhat informed about *almastys*, because I have heard a great deal spoken about them. Personally, I have seen them three times.

The first time was in October 1944. Our detachment (of police) was on horseback, crossing a field of hemp, on the steppe... Suddenly, the horse of the first man stopped so abruptly that I almost ran into it. I was riding second in line...He said to me: "Look! An *almasty*:" Just in front of us, a few meters away, an *almasty* was stuffing into its mouth the

ends of stalks of hemp, with the grains on them. Behind us, the detachment was gathering around and making some noise. It saw us and ran away very rapidly – it ran extraordinarily fast – toward a shepherd's cabin, which was not far away. While it was running, several men of our detachment took their rifles from their shoulders and prepared to fire, but our chief, a Russian officer from Nalchik, cried out: "Don't shoot, don't shoot. Let's capture it alive and take it to Nalchik."

We dismounted and surrounded the shepherd's cabin. We were quite numerous, and were able to form a solid circle around the cabin. I was just opposite the door, and saw everything very well. When we approached, the *almasty* came out of the cabin two or three times, in one bound. It appeared very agitated; it came out, moved around, jumped to one side, but then saw the men. It went back in in one jump, leaped out again right away, jumped to another side, but there also it saw the men. In doing this, it grimaced, with its lips moving very, very fast, and it mumbled something.

Meanwhile, our cordon was approaching. We had closed ranks, and were advancing elbow to elbow. At this moment the *almasty* appeared again, jumped in all directions and, suddenly, gave a terrible cry and ran straight at the men. It ran faster than a horse. To tell the truth, the men were taken by surprise. It easily broke through our cordon, jumped into the ravine and disappeared in the brush surrounding the river.

It was about 1m80 in height, and very robust. One could not see its face well because of the hair. Its breasts hung down to its middle. It was covered with long shaggy red hair, like that of the buffalo. The hair could be seen clearly through the pieces of the old handmade Kabardian caftan which it was wearing, and which was completely in tatters.

One must look for *almastys* at night, near fields of hemp, when it is ripe. They love hemp. They eat a great deal of it, walking around in the fields and stuffing themselves with clusters of the grain. While doing this, they

mumble all the time: “Boom, boom, boom!” They chew noisily, they blow from their noses, and they rustle the stalks. When an *almasty* is eating hemp, it can be heard at a great distance, at night. How many times in the past I have heard them mumbling this way. In recent years, I have never heard them anymore.

Almastys also like water-melons. In the past, they came into the plantations and did a great deal of damage. I had a friend, an old man; he was guardian of a melon-field on the kolkhoz (collective farm), and lived in a hut there. It was before the war. One day, I went to see him and I noticed that many of the melons had been damaged; they had been chewed on in a strange way, and were eaten in the middle. I picked up one and saw the marks of very large teeth. I then understood that it was the *almasty* which had done this. I arrived at my friend's, I laughed and I said, “You're a fine guardian! Look at your plantation, look what has happened to it!” He answered me, “Be quiet! This *almasty* takes all my strength. Every night it comes and eats the water-melons. I go out to meet it with my stick, but I don't dare come too close. I shout at it, “Aren't you ashamed! Go away!” It says to me, “Boom–boom–boom”. I shout again, “You have no conscience! Me, I'm the guardian here. I'm responsible for the water-melons.” It answers me: “Boom–boom–boom.” And there you are, we chat like that all night.

Do you know of any cases where an almasty has been killed, or a carcass has been found?

Thirty or forty years ago, two shepherds came and told how they had found in the forest a very recently dead carcass of an *almasty*, devoured by wolves or dogs. In fact, there was not even a carcass any more, as only the head remained. The shepherds were very upset. They kept repeating, “That will bring a lot of trouble! That will bring a lot of trouble!”

Why do certain almastys wear human clothing?

First of all, our people take pity on *almastys*. Earlier, it happened very often that *almastys* came into the houses, for us to give them

something to eat. At the same time, they would be given some clothing, so that they would not be cold.

Secondly, the *almastys* take things themselves. That happened very often, in former times. Let's say, someone goes into the forest or into the fields, to collect wood or to cut hay. He hangs his food and some of his clothing on a branch or somewhere, in order not to be too warm. He comes back a few hours later, his food has been eaten, and his clothing has disappeared. The *almastys* have stolen everything.

The *almastys* watch man very closely. For example, a man is walking in the forest. It's hot. He sees a river. He undresses, puts his things on the bank, and goes in swimming. Then, he comes out, dresses, and goes on his way. Immediately, as soon as he has left, at the very same moment, out of the forest comes the *almasty*, that is, clearly, if there had been one nearby. Necessarily, it will come to the place where the clothing had been put down. It will feel around the ground, and will sniff at it. The *almasty* is very curious.

DEVOURED BY DOGS

Story told by Koumykov Feitsa, 67 years, Kabardian of Kurkujin.

I have seen a good many *almastys*. How many times? I can tell you that I saw them all of the time, during 5 years, in summer, when I was in the mountain pastures. It was in the 1930s, in the direction of Elbruz, in a rocky area, where, there were caverns. There were many *almastys* in this region. They went in and out of the caverns like bees in a hive, high up above us, but I never saw more than one at a time. They were of different ages, little ones, big ones. I believe that there were more women than men. In the men, the pouches were placed farther back, as with the wild boar. I never saw very little ones, or new-born ones, but I often heard them crying. The old people say that the women

find a way to attach them to their breasts.

The *almastys* are like people; they have arms and legs like people, except that they are covered with hair. The hair is like that of a bear, and dark. I always saw them without clothing; I never saw them wearing clothing.

They do not know how to speak; they only mumble or bellow. They are not afraid of people, only of dogs. They run very fast. They always came very early in the morning or at sunset – because they were afraid of the dogs – in order to lick pieces of rock salt near our shelter. I often saw them do this, almost every day. They came when the sheep were not there, and when the dogs had gone with the sheep.

Twice during this time I saw them quite close. One day, I was coming back from the village. It was very far. I had a small bag with food – cheese, bread, a piece of mutton. Toward evening, it began to rain very hard. I went into a cavern, made a wood fire, and spread out my woolen cape. At night, the rain fell even harder.

All at once, something entered the cavern. It was very big, covered with reddish fur, and walking on two legs. For a moment I thought it was a bear, and then, no, I saw it was an *almasty*. I was very frightened. I was not armed, and had only my dagger. I was seated sideways to it, and pretended not to see anything. But, I was more dead than alive. I had my dagger in my right hand, hidden on my chest so that it could not see it, in order not to make it angry. Then, I calmed down a bit, remembering that the old people always say that, if one does not do it any harm, it never touches man. Nevertheless, the *almasty* sat down near the fire, at one side, and began to squeeze water out of its fur, for it was soaked. It did it like this (*Koumykov took a lock of hair in his two hands and pulled downward; the hair was dried by pressure and by the sliding of his hand against the skin*).

Then, it sat down close to the fire, turning first one side and then the other to the fire. Finally, it was leaning almost against my feet. I moved

aside a little, very carefully, but it leaned against my feet again. In this way, little by little, it pushed me away from the fire. I was completely reassured, because I could see that it was not dangerous. Moreover, it was a woman. She had very long breasts, which hung down across her abdomen. I said several words to it, and then I tried to talk to it, in Kabardian, in Balkar, and then in Russian. But it only mumbled incomprehensible sounds.

I began to be sleepy, as it was already very late. But, I did not dare to sleep. Finally, I finished by dozing, lying on my left side. During the night, I very clearly heard it biting and chewing. I thought, “Good God, my food!” But, I didn't say anything. I heard it sucking on the bones.

In the morning, I awoke very early, and saw that it was no longer there. My bag had been opened, and was empty. It had eaten everything, the wretched creature, and had left me nothing. The bones from the mutton were carefully lined up beside the bag.

The other time, it happened this way: I had left with two donkeys, to try my luck at hunting, staying in a cabin of neighboring Balkars, who were absent. It was in the brush, not far from our sheep-fold. Our four dogs, big Caucasian sheep-dogs, had followed me. It was toward evening. When we approached, the dogs suddenly ran forward, and began to run around the cabin, barking. I said to myself, “There is something in the cabin.” I came up to the door, and opened it carefully. In the middle of the cabin an *almasty* was standing. I stayed in the door, and the *almasty* looked at me, its lips moving fast, very fast.

It should have stayed there, as I would never have allowed the dogs to do it any harm. But, it was probably very frightened. Suddenly, it jumped toward the door and escaped, hitting me on the left shoulder as it did so. I almost fell. For a month, my shoulder was sore. It ran on two legs, very fast, and crying in a very shrill and loud voice, like a woman.

I tried to hold back the dogs, I yelled and called. But, you can imagine! The dogs came back two or three hours later, tired out, muzzles and paws bloody, and yet without a scratch on them. So, they must have torn the thing to pieces. Dogs cannot stand them, the *almastys*.

What does it eat, the almasty?

It eats the afterbirth of cattle, dead horses, and carrion. It goes to the places where man relieves himself. They eat hellebore¹. I have heard old people say this, and I have myself seen that they eat a great deal of it.

THE OCCUPANT OF THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

Story told by Pchoukov Mohamed, 40 years, Kabardian, mason, inhabitant of Kyzburun.

It was in 1939 or 1940, in summer...Where she came from, I do not know, but one day a female *almasty* appeared in our vegetable garden, and settled in the corn section. She made a nest there with old rags and grass. She passed a week with us, without ever leaving the vegetable garden. She ate green corn. She was entirely covered with fur. Her hair was very long. The breasts were elongated, and hung like on a woman, but very low down. The nails were long. The eyes were slanted and red. The teeth were larger than in man, and the lips were the lips of a monkey.

During the day, she always remained lying down. In general, she lay on her side, but she turned all of the time, and never stayed in the same position for long.

Many people came to us to see her. If several people approached at the same time, she became nervous, sat up, cried, stood up and pulled on her hair. She cried in a very loud

voice, like a woman.

When she was calm, if there was someone near her, she would come up slowly and begin to lick the person, like a dog. When you left her, your shirt sleeve was all wet; she would lick your entire shoulder.

NOISY NEIGHBOURS

Story told by Khakonov Danial, 65 years, pensioner, Kabardian, from Karmakovo.

When I worked as a shepherd in the Akbecheyouko Valley, at the same sheep-fold where you were this morning, I saw *almastys* all the time. It was in the 1940s. One evening, at the end of October, we were cooking meat. At this moment, the sheep scattered. We went running around to get them back together. When we came back, an hour later – no more cooking pot. It was a pot of some fifteen liters. What did we think? We didn't think anything. We didn't have to think: We knew without thinking that it had been done by *almastys*.

Not far from us, there was an old cabin. *Almastys* lived there. How many? I don't know. Probably a whole family, six or seven. We heard them stirring around and making noise every day, toward evening. They were agitated, they beat one another; they played. They are a very noisy people. They squeal, they shout, they cry. They do not have a human language; rather, they speak like a drum, "Boom–boom–boom." None of us ever went into that house. One day I offered a sheep to anyone who would, but no one accepted. They, on the other hand, came into our sheep-fold and took left-over food.

One day, they pulled into their house a rain-pipe which had been lying outside. All night long they played with this pipe. They beat on it. They didn't let us sleep at all that night. We were five men, married men, with rifles. But, we were afraid to go see what they were doing.

As for the cooking pot, it was found in the

¹ *Editor's Note:* Hellebore -- Members of the Eurasian genus *Helleborus* comprise approximately 20 species of herbaceous or evergreen perennial flowering plants in the family Ranunculaceae.

morning, empty, of course, not far away, between the stream and their house.

I worked for three years in that place. They were there all of the time, especially in summer. Our dogs became accustomed to them. They growled, but didn't touch them. However, if the dogs surrounded one, the *almasty* began to cry out very loudly.

I often saw their tracks: Five toes, no plantar arch, round heel, wide sole. Their prints resemble somewhat those of a bear. I have not returned there since 1947.

THE NIGHT MEAL

Story told by Didanov Dina, 40 years, Kabardian, electrician at Baksan.

In the summer of 1950, I was sent to make an inventory of the farms in the mountain pastures of Elbruz. Toward midnight, we went to lie down. The shelter had three walls of stone. There was no fourth wall; it was open on that side. Everyone lay down on the ground, on hay, under our woolen capes, heads toward the interior wall, feet toward the exterior. I was lying at the edge. Between the side wall and me there was a space where the soup pot and a frying-pan full of grilled meat had been stored.

Everyone fell asleep quickly. Me, I was young, a little excited by the conversation, the meal, the unusual surroundings – it was the first time that I was sleeping in the mountains – and I did not go to sleep. My neighbor, an old man, was not sleeping either. From time to time he would doze off, then wake up, smoke, and fall asleep again.

All of a sudden, a sort of woman entered the shelter, rapidly and silently. She was hideous, with long hair down to the waist. She looked at the wall where a bridle was hanging, a Caucasian bridle decorated with metallic pendants. She took down the bridle, turned it over and over again, examined it from all sides, and then hung it up on the wall again and went out quietly. I was petrified with fear. At that

moment the old man was not sleeping. I asked him, “What was that?” He answered me calmly, “It's nothing, don't pay any attention. If you stay here, you will see a lot of things like that.” And he went back to sleep.

All at once, she reappeared, stopped, stood motionless, examined very carefully the sleeping men, rapidly approached the saucepans and found herself one or two meters from me. The pot was covered with its lid and, as is our custom, the frying-pan was covered with another frying-pan. She stooped down, took the cover off the frying-pan quickly and quietly, and began to eat. She ate at random, at times the meat from the frying-pan, at times the soup. She dipped into the soup with the big wooden ladle which she had taken from the cover. She did not hold it as people would, but with all five fingers on one side. Her fingers were very long, except for the thumb, which was shorter than a man's.

Her appearance was hideous; not attractive at all. She was completely hairy, with dark reddish-brown fur covering her entire body. Long breasts extended down to the abdomen. The hair was loose, long and tangled. The nose was small, not turned up, as this man said, but flat. The mouth stretched very wide, much more so than ours, and the lips were thin, as in monkeys. The skin was black. The cheeks were prominent, as in Chinese or Koreans. However, there are Chinese and Chinese. Some have more prominent cheeks, and others less so. As for her, she had very prominent ones, like a true, authentic Chinese. The eyes slanted sharply and their color was like this: If, in place of the eyes, one put little bulbs from a pocket lamp and then placed a red glass in front of them, well, that would be exactly like her eyes.

She was wearing a sort of dress, all torn and disgusting. She ate very quickly, seated on her heels, grabbing now the meat, now the soup, with very rapid movements. She chewed very quickly. In fact, I don't even know if she chewed or swallowed directly. But she

devoted close attention to eating, without stopping for a second to look to the right or to the left.

What struck me was the speed, the precision and the silence of her movements. On my word of honor, if I had begun to eat I would certainly have made some noise. I would have knocked against something. As for her, she did everything in complete silence. Just like in a silent film at the cinema. For example, when she took the bridle: The bridle had national ornaments in metal, and they should necessarily have jingled together. Well, she took it down, turned it around, and hung it back up again without the slightest sound.

When she had finished eating, she put the lid back on the pot, quickly and silently, she closed the frying-pan with the other frying-pan, she put the wooden ladle back on the cover, at exactly the place where she had found it, and went out.

If I had been alone I would probably have died of fright. But, although I was afraid, I felt calm, because there were a lot of people around. I said to myself, if something happens I shall start to shout, and they will all get up.

I was not able to go to sleep for a long time. In the morning, everyone began to eat the meat and the soup, and to offer it to me. I declined: Me, I had seen what had been eating it during the night! I said that I was not accustomed to eat in the morning.

THE DEAD ALMASTY

Story told by Zhigounov Khazrail Khamid, 46 years, Kabardian, measurer in the brickworks of Baksan.

At the end of September in 1939 or 1940, I was following the road from Nizhnii Kourkouzhine to Malka. I decided to cut across an immense field of corn. I had hardly left the road, about forty meters away from it, when I fell on the remains of an *almasty* which had been devoured by wolves or dogs. Over a space of about twelve meters in diameter, everything had been

trampled down, the corn was beaten down and destroyed. In the middle of this area lay the head of the *almasty* with what remained of the neck. The left half of the neck had been devoured. Until that day I did not believe in the existence of *almastys*. I laughed and claimed that they were fables and inventions. That is why I proceeded to examine this head with particular interest. Armed with a stick, I turned it over on all sides and, sitting on my heels, I examined it closely.

The head was enveloped in a whole mane of very long hair which, in the living state, probably reached to the waist. The hair was very tangled and matted with thistles. This mane was so thick that, when I turned the head, it remained in the air, as on a cushion. That is why I was not able to discern the form of the skull. However, its dimensions were those of a human skull. The forehead was receding. This spot is very prominent (*points to the eyebrows*). The nose is small and turned up. It had no root, and was as though pushed into the face. It was the nose of a monkey. The cheeks were prominent, like those of a Chinese. The lips were not those of a man. Rather, they were thin and straight, as in monkeys. I did not see the teeth, as the lips were pressed firmly together. The chin was not as in man, but was rounded and heavy. The ears were human; one was torn, the other intact. The eyes were strongly slanted, with the apertures directed downward and outward. I do not know the color of the eyes. The eyelids were closed, and I did not raise them. The skin was black, and covered with dark reddish-brown hair. The hair was absent around the eyes and on the upper parts of the cheeks. The cheeks themselves and the ears were covered with short hair. On the neck and the chin the hair was longer.

The head gave off a powerful and repulsive odor. It was not the odor of decomposition: The remains were fresh and did not smell of anything. There were no flies or worms. It was the odor of the *almasty* itself, so sickening that I nearly vomited. Also, I examined the head,

holding my nostrils shut with my left hand while I maneuvered the stick with my right. The odor resembled that of old filth, or a dirty body, or mold.

Nearby were scattered the other parts of the body. I saw whitish bones covered with fragments of flesh, but I did not go near them.

Does the face of the almasty resemble more that of a man or that of a monkey?

It is very difficult to answer you. The nose and lips are exactly those of a monkey. But, plainly, taken all together, the face resembles that of a man.

We showed Zhigounov the “portrait” of *Pithecanthropus*, as reconstituted by Burian. Zhigounov, and he noted a certain resemblance between its nose and that of the *almasty*. Pointing to the chin, he repeated several times: “Exactly like that!” The mouth also bore a certain resemblance. The eyes and their apertures were totally different. Overall, aside from the lower part of the face, he found only a very general similarity to the *almasty*.

A BIRTH IN AN ALMASTY FAMILY

Story told by Akhaminov Khouzer Bekanlouk, 55 years, Kabardian, farmer at Planovskoye.

A month ago, on the 10th of August (1964), about 3 km from the village, I was scything in a field of sunflowers where there remained some open places where seeds had not been sown. Suddenly I heard a strong noise, as if someone were blowing noisily - like a dog, when a fly gets into his nose... When the sound occurred a third time, I put down my scythe and went to look. Suddenly, two arms, like human ones but long, black and hairy, extended out of the foliage in my direction. I ran immediately to my cart and climbed up on it. It had been unhitched about ten meters away. Standing on the cart, I saw a silhouette, resembling a human one, which was bent over, and was pushing into the sunflowers. I only saw clearly the back, which was covered

with long reddish fur, like that of the buffalo, and the long hair of the head. I did not see its face. When the *almasty* had left (I recognized it at once, because formerly I had seen others), I came down from my cart and returned to my scythe. At that moment I heard a squealing at the same place. I advanced carefully, and pushed the stalks apart.

On the packed-down grass, as in a nest, were lying two new-borns. It was clear that she had just given birth. They were exactly like human babies, except that they were smaller. They must have weighed around two kilos, not more. Apart from that, you would not have been able to distinguish them from our little ones. They had rosy skin, like human infants, exactly the same head, the same arms and legs. They were not hairy. No, I stress this: They were not hairy. They looked like new-born humans or new-born rats – bare, and with rosy skin. They were waving their little arms and legs, just like our newborns, and squalling.

I got away from there in a hurry. I quickly hitched up my donkey and returned to the village. Two or three days later I came back, but there was no one around.

Why did you not tell anyone about this?

What do you mean – not tell anyone? I told my wife and my neighbors about it.

I mean, why did you not report it?

But, report it to who? For what reason?

To the authorities, to the police, to the selsoviet! (The idea of reporting such foolishness to the authorities - an *almasty* giving birth! – aroused great hilarity from the small group present). *But, you didn't know that this is of interest, that scientists are studying the almasty?*

Who knew that that was important! Never in my life have I heard it said that that could be of interest to anyone.

AN ALMASTY IN THE BATH

Story told by Khadji Mourat, 23 years, Azerbaijani, chauffeur at Belokany.

In the autumn of 1950, I was walking at night along the edge of the Belokane-chai River. I was carrying a sack of rice which I had “pinched” down there at the old mill. It weighed some twenty kilos. Plainly, I did not want to meet anyone. As if intentionally, the moon was shining as brightly as possible. Also, I had not taken the main street but, rather, the back alleys of the village, along the river. All at once, I heard a noisy splashing. I thought at first that the wind was carrying the sound of the rapids. But, there was no wind and, also, the rapids are quite small. The splashing was repeated regularly, as if someone were emptying a bucket all at once. I said to myself, “That must be the neighbor across the way, who is taking a bath – the devil take him. What am I going to do to get by?”

I came up to the river bank carefully, and looked around from behind a rock. In the moonlight, I saw a person, very tall, standing in the water. He was standing up straight, and throwing enormous handfuls of water over himself. “That’s curious, I thought, the neighbor isn’t that big.” At that moment I saw the long hair on the head. “Bah, that’s better! I said to myself, it’s not the neighbor, it’s his wife! Well, I said to myself, I’m going to watch her take a bath.” I was a young fellow, a bachelor. Not yet married. So in any case it was interesting to see a good-looking woman!

I put down my sack and crept up carefully. I arrived at the water’s edge, but just at that point there were bushes which got in the way, so that one could only see very poorly. I had to retreat. She was just behind a rocky outcropping. I went down on my chest, crawled toward the rock, and raised my head slowly, exactly at the level of the water, right beside her. I almost gave up the ghost right there. In the water was standing a dreadful-looking woman, abominable. It wasn’t a face that she had, but a frightful muzzle. And enormous hands, long ones. She was filling them with water and throwing it on her shoulders. On my word of honor, it was a half-bucketful that she scooped

up each time. Then, she took her breasts and began to throw them on the water. Now, her breasts were enormous, very long, and made a loud slapping sound on the water. Then, she started to throw water over herself again.

My hair was standing up on my head. I crawled slowly backward, then I jumped to my feet and ran across the road to the neighbor, the same one of whom I thought it was himself or his wife who was bathing. I knocked at his door for quite a long time. Finally, he came out. I said to him: “Get your rifle and come quickly, there is a *kaptar* (a horrible mythological creature) which is taking a bath, come see.” At first, he hesitated, and then we left. When we arrived, there was no one in sight. The neighbor helped me to carry the rice and so, clearly, I had to share it with him.

THE INCREDULOUS VETERINARY

Story told by Omarov Ramazane, 37 years, Lakh, director of the veterinarian and zoological station of the district of Tliarata, in the Republic of Daghestan.

On 20 August 1959 I was coming back across the mountain to Antzoug. It was about 6 o’clock in the evening. The visibility was very good. I was coming down a small valley where the trees were quite sparse. When I reached the big white rock...I noticed an animal that was moving at the base of it. I thought that it was a bear and I hid behind a bush. I had no arms of any sort on me. I had only my bridle and the bag in which I carry the supplies needed for vaccinations.

While hiding behind my bush, I began to observe. The animal which, so far as I could see, had been seated, got up suddenly and started in my direction on its two legs. It was a creature which resembled both a man and a monkey at the same time. Since I was a child I had heard stories of *kaptars*, but I did not believe in them. Well, this was one, which I now saw with my own eyes.

Its fur was long and black, like that of a goat. The neck was virtually nonexistent, the head resting directly on the shoulders. Long hair hung down from it. The *kaptar* approached. It was going not toward me, but to one side. It was a man. The head was long, and tapered to a point toward the top. In other words, it was conical or ovoid in form. Its long arms hung almost to the knees. It swung them while walking, and they jerked, as though they were articulated on bolts. They gave the impression of having been assembled in joints, like a child's plaything.

At about 200 m from where I was, this strange creature crossed the path and sat down again. It remained seated two or three minutes, with its hands touching the ground. It reminded me of an athlete doing warming-up exercises. Then, it got up again and went toward a bush on the other side of the crest and disappeared. I did not see it any more. I abandoned my bush and came calmly back to the house.

What struck me the most? It went up the slope very quickly, taking steps of a meter and even more. A man would not be able to go up such a steep slope in such great strides.

I thought of the chimpanzee which I had seen in the zoo of Tbilissi. The fur of the chimpanzee is shorter, and its head more round. Its arms and legs are also shorter. It must be said, it is true, that its size is much smaller. The *kaptar* did not measure less than 1m80, and it resembled more a man than a monkey. It walked erect, with just the head inclined a little forward from the shoulders. There was no tail. Another typical thing: With wolves and bears, one always sees the ears, even if they have short ones, whereas here the hair covered the ears, and they were not visible.

Clearly, I was afraid. But, my curiosity was even stronger than my fear. I have lived 37 years, and I had always thought that the *kaptar* was the invention of superstitious people. Now, I know that to be false; I saw it myself.

THE ALMASTY HUNT

Story told by Efendiev Mustapha Abdoul, 61 years, Lesghe, teacher, Makhatchkala, in the Republic of Daghestan.

My neighbor, an old shepherd of 90 years, with tremendous experience, Moussa Idrissov, had this adventure. In 1955, in the autumn, just as they did each year, the shepherds of the village of Khnor led their flocks of sheep across the mountains, toward the winter pastures in Azerbaijan. They had to cross the forest of Saryj, and stop there for the night. The shepherds killed a goat, made a wood fire, and began to prepare supper.

Toward midnight, while they were getting ready to eat, they heard very loud breathing...and saw a creature of human appearance, covered with black fur. Its appearance had not produced any panic in the sheep. The shepherds were afraid. "It's an *alnab*, said Moussa. Probably it's hungry and wants us to give it something to eat." Taking some bread and a piece of meat which was cooking on the grill, he threw them to the *alnab*. This latter leaped upon the food avidly and devoured it rapidly. Then, after remaining there for a little while, it backed away and disappeared. In the darkness its eyes were shining like those of a cat.

Fearing an attack by this being, which the shepherds, who were all Lesghes, knew little or not at all, they climbed up into the trees with their rifles. Indeed, at the end of about an hour and a half, the *alnab* reappeared and tried to gather up the meat. At that moment Moussa fired. A terrible howling was heard. The *alnab* dropped the meat and turned toward the sound of the detonation. Now, it was the turn of Daoud to fire. The *alnab* hurried away, limping, and disappeared into the forest.

At dawn, the shepherds noticed traces of blood on the grass. Moussa and Daoud followed the trail, while the third shepherd remained with the sheep. The trail led Moussa and Daoud to the Ptchar. Here, on the bank, they found the

bloody body of the *alnab*. One bullet had struck it in the leg, and the other had pierced its chest.

It was about 2 m tall. Its head had the shape of an egg. The nose was as though it had been pushed into the face. The chin was very massive. Long, tangled hair hung from its head. Its body gave off a strong and very repulsive odor.

The shepherds said that no one would believe them, so that it was necessary to collect some clear proof. From the head, they cut 'off the ears and a handful of hair. From the right hand they cut off the phalanges of the thumb and the index finger.

When Moussa and Daoud returned to their camp, they were already awaited by newly arrived shepherds. As they had expected, the new arrivals did not believe them. They were not even convinced by the evident proof. Then, Moussa and Daoud led them to the riverbank, where the body was lying.

Three months later, Moussa came back to the village and began to build a house. He placed the ears, the hair and the phalanxes of the *alnab* in the foundation, as a talisman to preserve him from *alnabs*. It was at this moment that he showed them to me.

AGILE AND BOUNDING ABOUT

Story told by Lobtanidze B. F., Georgian, Engineer at Tbilissi in the Republic of Georgia. Letter addressed to the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Moscow, 16 December 1960.

After having read in “*Tbilissi-Evening*” your article “Would there be a ‘Snowman’ in Transcaucasia,” I decided to write to you to tell you about an episode which happened to me some years ago.

It was in the summer of 1940. We were with my brother, R. I. Metreveli, today an employee of the Academy of Arts of Georgia, in the village of Ordzhonikidze, in the district of Lagodekhi. We decided one day to go on an

outing, 3-4 km from the village, in the plantations of tobacco. A young boy of our family, A. F. Lobtanidze, accompanied us.

We were already about to return, when the child cried out: “Look, look, somebody is watching us from the tree”. We stared closely at the tree and discovered there a man who, with his hand shading his eyes, was watching in our direction. Nevertheless, he seemed not to have discovered us, and we kept quiet and decided to observe him. Soon, however, we had to change our minds. Indeed, this creature began to jump from one branch to another, upward and downward, and with such rapidity that we decided that it was a monkey. Feeling more confident, we approached to within 25-30 m but, then, we were overcome with real fear.

It was something frightful, neither man nor monkey. It resembled rather a man of enormous size, with long hair covering its entire body. Finally, it hung by its hands from a branch, jumped to the ground from a height of about 4 m, and disappeared into the brush.

Some minutes later, we heard footsteps and the sound of conversation, and three men from the neighboring village made their appearance on the road. Now, the tree where this creature had been was quite close to the road. I must say that we all were really very much afraid. When we got back to the village, we recounted our adventure. Some people laughed, but others shared our sentiments.

Why did Apakidze not tell me exactly the same thing as you? (Until that moment Kapanadze did not know that I had just seen his old companion, in a distant village, from which I had arrived directly by motorcycle).

Because he was asleep. I was the one who awakened him. As long as the wildman was coming down and drinking, I didn't dare budge. When he started to go back up, I shook Apakidze quickly and said to him: “Look quickly, what is that? – A bear or what?” The old man whispered to me “Be quiet, be quiet, I know what it is!” He couldn't tell you

everything, because he had only been watching from the moment when the wild man was going back up.

Do you believe that the wild man saw you?

Yes, I think so. He could not have *not* seen us. First, he came down directly opposite our cabin, and opposite me. Second, the wood fire was burning, since I was preparing lunch. He could not have failed to notice the fire. And, moreover, when he had finished drinking and got up, before starting back up, he turned his head toward us, looked over his shoulder, and went away.

We then went together to look at his tracks. We could see them clearly, because the ground was moist. The footprints were like human ones, except that the toes were longer and the nails were also. In certain places, where he was climbing, they had scratched the ground. It doesn't look anything like the footprint of a bear. It was a human footprint, but larger. The heel was wider than that of a man's and, at the base of the toes, the sole of the foot was much wider.

DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF THE *ALMASTY*

The number of citations here is limited; they could be multiplied by tens. The citations are accompanied by a figure (reference number in the file) and by a letter designating the republic ("a" for Azerbaijan, "g" for Georgia, "k" for Kabarda, Balkaria, Karachai, etc.).

The gender of the beings observed is designated by the usual symbols "♂ and ♀." When it has not been determined, which is frequently the case, the individual is presented as "x." Children and adolescents figure under the symbol "Δ."

The anatomical characteristics are presented according to the scheme of description generally accepted in anthropometry: Size, skin and its derivatives, members and their proportions, skull.

Size

Plainly, this varies according to the age and the individual. Overall, however, it appears to reach and exceed human averages. Individuals of 2 m - 2m20 are not rare.

One certainty – dimorphism of the sexes does not exist. With regard to size – large adult females are just as tall and as strong as males.

Skin and its derivatives

Color:

"Where there is no fur, the skin is black" (Δ 52k). "The skin of the face is black" (♀ 54k) "The skin of the palm of the hands is dark reddish brown... On the buttocks, the fur is absent, the skin is dark reddish brown" (x 141k).

Hairy cover:

"It seemed to me that the chest was more hairy than the back. On the buttocks, the hair was shorter and very sparse; through it one could see a dark skin. At the level of the waist, the hair was very thick and very long, covering partially the top of the buttocks. On the shoulders it was so thick that it was impossible to see where the hair hanging from the head ended. The legs and the backs of the feet were covered with hair that appeared to be very rough" (♂ 47a). "The back of the hand has very little hair, but on the forearm it is so long that it covers the back of the hand" (x 126k). This hairy cover is absent at birth, as described in the reports of two sightings. Nevertheless, it forms rapidly. "In the corner of the cabin, an *almasty* was sitting on some hay; it had in its arms a tiny little one... the baby had a black skin, entirely covered with black hair, but these were short and not thick" (♀ Δ 60k). "With one hand she was holding her little one, all covered with fur, two or three years of age" (♀ Δ lak).

Hair:

Very abundant, long, very rough ("like the mane of a horse" 7a). That of the males reaches "down to the shoulder blades, and even a bit

lower” (♂ 1a). The females have much longer hair. “...very long hair, down to the waist and lower” (71k). “...then, she got up slowly, gathered up her long hair, which was hanging down below her waist, and threw it over her left forearm” (49k).

Odor:

This has already been mentioned in several of the eyewitness reports quoted. The witnesses are not lacking in graphic descriptions: “...it stank like a dead dog” (♂ 76k). “...it stank like a cesspool. Where it had been sitting, its odor remained for almost a week” (♂ 100k). “It seems to me that this powerful odor is given off primarily by the male.” Each time it is reported, it is in connection either with “men” or with individuals in which the gender could not be determined, but which seemed to be males.

Upper members

“The shoulders are set forward” (♀ 49k). “Rounded, the shoulders leaned in man” (♀ 48k). “Its arms, longer than held them away from elbows” (♂ 31k). “Its arm was as big as the thigh of a man (♀♂♂ 86k). “The hand resembles that of man, except that it does not have this flesh (the witness points to the thenar eminence), and the palm is flat. The thumb is short, shorter than the other fingers and, in comparison to man, even more so. The other fingers, on the other hand, are longer. The thumb is not placed, as in man, opposite the other fingers, but in the same alignment as they are. The nails are long, but not pointed. The palms are covered with black callouses” (♂ 52k).

Lower members

“Its shoulders were wide, but its pelvis narrow” (♀ 54k). “The legs are short and bowed (♀ Machk. 1k). “The thighs are thicker than in man” (x 40a). “The thighs are thick, the leg is very slender” (♀ 141k). “The legs are of the same thickness as the forearm of man above the wrist” (x 38a). “...the feet turned in, the knees a little bended, the legs bowed like those of a

good horseman” (x 31k). “legs bowed, feet turned in” (x 64a). “...its legs, it held them like this (*the witness spreads his legs apart, with knees slightly bended and feet turned in*)” (♀ 119k). “The legs are slender, but the feet are big” (♂ 103k). “The feet are thick” (♀♂ 60a). “The feet are slightly turned in. The toes are spread out in a fan” (x 31k). “The feet are very wide, less so at the heel, but toward the base of the toes the foot widens and at this point (the witness points to the metatarsal-phalangeal articulation I), it's as big as an egg” (x 107k).

Skull

General configuration and relationships of the cerebral and facial cranium:

“While she herself was large and robust, her skull was small and narrow, in the form of an egg” (♀ 54k). “The skull was not as high as in man, but flatter... Here again is something curious: In man, the face is narrow with respect to the skull, and smaller, whereas with this creature the perimeter of the skull is fitting, but as the skull is not as tall as in man, but rather flatter, the result is a very large face, a real muzzle” (x 31k). “The face is not good. It's as in man, but the mouth is brought forward.”

Question - As in a monkey?

Answer - Why as in a monkey? I have seen a good many monkeys. The muzzle of the monkey, it's pulled forward, like in a dog. But with this creature, its muzzle is less brought forward than in a monkey, but more so than in man. As for its face, it could be said to be half-way between man and monkey” (♂ 13a).

“The forehead is narrow, receding toward the back.” “The forehead is low” (♀♂ 34k). “The forehead is narrow” (♂ 79k).

Superciliary arches:

Described as very prominent in various eyewitness reports cited. Some other descriptions: “The forehead overhangs the eyes, like the visor on a helmet” (♀ 141k). “The eyebrows are extremely prominent” (♂ 4-5 years, 52k).

Zygomatic arches:

Their strong prominence also is mentioned often in the communications presented here. It is a trait which figures in almost all of the descriptions of the face.

Chin:

“Its chin is not like that of man. Man has a fine, pointed chin. In this creature, the chin is round, heavy, not pointed, but massive” (x 31k). “The chin is not like in people – there is not this” (*the witness designates the mental prominence.* ♂ 100k).

Nose:

“The nose is like that of a syphilitic (*At this point the witness designates the root of the nose*), there isn't anything.” “The nose is small and flattened, as if it had been pushed forcefully against the face” (♂ 76k). “The nose is very wide, flattened, the nostrils flare out like 10-kopeck coins” (♀ 119k).

Ears:

“The ears are flat and placed higher than in man” (A 52k). “Its face is like that of man, except that the ears are elongated upward” (♀ 43a). “The nose is like that of someone pressing strongly against a window pane.” If there is something which distinguishes it from man, it is certainly the ears. The ears are large, larger than in man” (♂ 126k).

Mouth and Lips:

“The mouth stretches very wide” (A 31k). “The mouth stretches very wide” (♀ 60k). “The mouth is twice as large as ours” (♂ 20a). “There are no lips; they are stretched as in a dog” (A 52k). “The lips are thin, like those of a monkey” (♀ 71k).

Teeth:

“The teeth are large” (♂ 21a). “The teeth are larger than in man” (♀ 65a). “The teeth are remarkable. It happens with people that one

tooth may be longer, and another may be shorter. With this one, they are quite regular and white, very white. Not thick. Like those of man. I saw them very clearly the second time, when I was perched in the tree” (♂ 47a). “...it was standing up, in the light of the headlights, with its lips turned up, and I saw its teeth, particularly, two large canine teeth, but I don't remember any more if they were upper or lower” (♂ 22a). “I opened its mouth with the handle of my whip... It was still quite young, but it already had large canine teeth, like those of a dog, large, pointed, but yellow. The upper and lower canines meshed together, just like they do in a dog” (A of 4-5 years, 52k). “The teeth are like in man, but bigger. The four front teeth are very large” (♀ 119k).

Eyes:

“The eyes are stretched and slanted, as in Chinese, but even more so” (♂ 4ak). “The eyes are strongly slanted, red, unattractive (x 67k). “...red, slanted eyes...” (♀ 68k). “What I remember especially are the eyes, slanting and red. With dogs, the eyes sometimes light up very strongly at night. Well, with this creature, it's the same thing, except that they are red” (x 62k). “I was very close to it. Its eyes had the faint gleam of a reddish light. I began to back up slowly. When I was next to it, its eyes were practically not shining at all. But, when I had backed up, they were shining with a strong red light” (x 28k). “When I saw it for the first time (at night), its eyes sparkled at times with a bright red color. At first I thought that they were cigarettes and I said to myself, “Well, what do you know! They smoke like us.” The second time also, their eyes lit up sometimes with a red light. But not all of the time. That depends probably on the illumination (♂♀ 49k).

Neck:

“The neck, it's as if it did not have any. The head is placed directly on the shoulders” (♂♀ 17a). “One didn't see any neck at all” (♂ 47a). “The head is embedded directly in the shoulders

(♂ 142k).

PORTRAIT OF THE *ALMASTY*

The *almasty* of the Caucasus thus appears to be a bipedal creature, with erect posture, of almost human appearance, and whose size, which varies with age, reaches 1m80 - 2m20 in adults of both sexes. It is of robust constitution and possesses a very powerful musculature.

It's very dark skin is covered with fur consisting of long (15 cm), rough hair, of which the thickness and color (generally reddish brown, more rarely black or gray) vary according to age, the region of the anatomy, and the individual. The skin of newborns is rosy and glabrous.

The hair on the head is abundant in both sexes. The long, pendant breasts of the females can be thrown over onto their backs.

Its back is arched, and the neck is not apparent.

The upper extremities are long; the hand is provided with long, powerful fingers, with long, flat nails. The musculature of the shoulders and arms is very highly developed.

The lower extremities, on the other hand, are rather short, and especially the leg which, moreover, is slightly bowed; the foot is flat, relatively short, very wide, with long, strong toes, very mobile in the sagittal and horizontal planes.

The skull is small and ovoid; the forehead is low, narrow and receding; the cranial dome is flat, with a prominent supraorbital visor, the zygomatic arches are very prominent; the prognathism is pronounced (oncognathism?); the round and massive mandible possesses a powerful dentition with highly developed canines; the root of the nose is recessed, and the nose is wide and flat, with gaping nostrils; the ocular apertures are very slanted, the dark and reddish eyes project a red gleam at night; the mouth is wide-stretched, with thin and drawn lips.

The strong and repugnant odor which the *almasty* gives off seems not to be due to

unclean fur alone.

As transposed into professional language, such are the essential morphological characteristics of the individual as described by the inhabitants of the Caucasus.

EXACTNESS AND CONSISTENCY OF THE DESCRIPTIONS

The anatomical authenticity of these characteristics is incontrovertible. To mention only the skull, for example, all of the descriptions collected constitute equally as many precise and very thought-provoking anatomical indications.

The harmony of the totality of these indications is equally striking. Not only is each of the elements described by the eyewitnesses exact in itself but, moreover, its presence is imposed by other elements, these also being present and authentic. Supraorbital bulge, recessed root of the nose, epicanthus, prognathism, platyrhiny (wide nostrils), etc., all fit together mutually within the framework of known and exact correlations. Even the absence of certain traits, such as prominence of the chin, for example, is logical: exclusive attribute of man, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, on this skull it would have been a nonsense. Reconstituted uniquely from oral descriptions, the skull of the *almasty* thus appears as a coherent anatomical entity.

With regard to the other parts the body, the same conclusions are unavoidable. The need to balance the weight of the heavy facial mass of a small skull (with foramen magnum perhaps set back) crowning a spine maintained in a leaning attitude, and also the rounding of the scapular girdle to which are attached heavy upper members ("its arm had the diameter of a man's thigh"), require a cervical and scapular musculature so important that the spine is buried in it and the neck is practically non-existent.

The thickness of the thigh associated with the slenderness of the calf may also be explained. The muscles of the thigh are

called upon frequently to maintain the lower members in slight flexion, an attitude which serves perhaps to absorb the considerable weight of the body and to assure silent movement in a rocky and forested habitat. We recall what this Georgian woodcutter endeavored to make us understand – “Its gait is human, but it walks a little like a wild animal.”

The small volume of the posterior muscles of the leg, doubtless unexpected in such a perfectly bipedal subject, could be explained by a structure of the plantar skeleton adapted precisely to the necessity of raising an enormous weight. It is evidenced by the length, inhabitual in man, of the calcaneum. The talocrural articulation is thus displaced distally, with increase in the length of the arm of the tarsal lever and, respectively, shortening of the metatarsal lever. In these conditions, the solicitation of the flexors of the foot is singularly diminished. This relationship of forces has been described on the perfectly intact skeleton of the Neanderthal foot of Kiik-Koba (famous site in the Crimea, where a Neanderthal skeleton was found with both feet practically completely preserved – 52 elements of 54). This same relationship of forces is believed by the American scientist Grover S. Krantz to exist on the foot of the *sasquatch* of the Rocky Mountains, first cousin of the *almasty*. It is also found in certain Negroid ethnic groups, which exhibit an astonishing slenderness of the muscle of the calf (triceps surae); these people are, in fact, especially fast and agile hunters.

The color of the eyes of the *almasty* is in no way extra-terrestrial. It is readily understood if one recalls that the crepuscular vision, which is provided by the bright-red visual purple of the rods, is reinforced in certain nocturnal species by a special organ, the tapetum. The crystals of this organ, like thousands of mirrors, reflect toward the retina the weak ray of light entering the eye, while at the same time strengthening it. The color of

this piercing metallic glint, which fascinates us in our domestic animals, depends on that of the back of the eye. This last is not the same in all species, and varies according to the structure of the ocular envelopes: Yellow in the elephant and other animals, green in the Canidae, it is red in primates, including man. This latter, as distinguished from monkeys, whose visual acuity, especially at night, is greatly superior to his, possesses few rods, and his tapetum is almost nonexistent. Nonetheless, even in the human eye, a powerful light can bring forth this reddish reflection, which often is seen in photographs taken with the aid of a flash. The bright red gleam from the eye of the *almasty*, a detail which at first glance is unusual and perplexing, thus has a quite ordinary physiological explanation.

Another conclusion appears evident: The balance between the anatomical form and its function. This balance is so perfect that, knowing the one, it becomes possible not only to explain but even to predict the other. The absence of a thenar eminence (the part of the palm of the hand located at the lower base of the thumb), reported by several eyewitnesses, leads to a weak opposability of the thumb. In fact, various eyewitnesses observed that the *almasty* grasps objects by unilateral prehension of the five fingers.

Given the seating of the head, bound to the shoulders by a powerful musculature, one cannot expect its movements to be free: To look to one side, the *almasty* pivots its shoulders and the upper part of its trunk, “like the wolf”, say the eyewitnesses, which in fact turns round in the same way. The *almasty* also uses its head as a means of combat, charging forward with head down, like the ram. The wide, gaping nostrils lead one to expect a highly developed capacity for olfactory detection. It is observed that the *almasty* often uses its sense of smell. When following a track it leans down frequently to sniff the ground, without breaking its stride.

LARGE MONKEY OR BACKWARD NEANDERTHAL?

All of this information is found to be confirmed by certain documents.

The skeleton of the hand corresponds to the skeleton of the mummified hand of Pangboche, attributed by the lamas of Tibet to the *yeti*, and described by numerous specialists as belonging to a primate and combining hominian and simian characteristics.

The foot, as described by eyewitnesses as massive, spread out, with a wide heel, with powerful and mobile toes, with characteristic inflexion of its distal part ("feet turned in"), fits precisely with the footprints which I have been able to photograph and collect in the form of casts in uninhabited regions of the mountains.

The *almasty* makes its nests under rocky outcroppings or in caverns, and these are made with grasses especially chosen by it (and not with just any material which comes to hand, as does the bear, for example). The provisions or the remains of food abandoned around these nests illustrate the bill of fare of the *almasty*, as supplied by the people of the region.

The hairy hominoid creatures, whose eyes give off a reddish light, which have been described by scientists in North America, and which are called "*sasquatches*" by the Indians, and Bigfoot by the whites, are not unrelated to the *almasty*.

The hundreds of descriptions supplied by the inhabitants of the Caucasus correspond in all cases exactly to those of the three Russian scientists who opened the Caucasian chapter: Professor Satounine in 1899, Doctor V. Karapetian in 1941, and Inspector K. Leontiev in 1958.

Extrapolated from hundreds of eyewitness reports, classified, subjected to statistical analysis and to anatomical dissection, the data and information concerning the morphology, the ecology and the ethology of the *almasty*, constitute authentic and precise reference points,

the convergence of which produces the appearance of an anatomically concrete, well defined, balanced and viable personage, devoid of any element of fantasy. The morphological reality, the biological verity, the anthropological authenticity of this individual, all are indisputable.

Moreover, the criteria which characterize it belong to a science, human paleontology, of which the old Caucasian shepherds, who are for the most part illiterate, are quite evidently unaware. The *almasty* described by them, with the preciseness and realism of men in constant contact with nature, cannot be the fruit of imagination.

So, what is the *almasty*? Great anthropoid for some, backward Neanderthal for others and, especially, Professor Porchnev, the *almasty* certainly presents many more hominian traits than simian. The absence of sexual dimorphism in the size and the robust constitution, the long breasts of the females, the abundant head of hair, the foot, all are characteristic of the species *Homo*. The canines (often described by observers as protruding and similar to those of the dog) inject into this tableau an importunate note, although an important one.

The anteroposterior elongation of the skull, the lowering of its dome, the prominence of the superciliary and the zygomatic arches, the width of the face, the heavy and rounded mandible without mental prominence, the arched back, the width of the shoulders and that of the hand, the length of the fingers, the slightness of the thumb, the relative brevity of the leg in relation to the thigh, the massiveness of the foot, all of these anatomical traits associated with undoubtedly human criteria, evoke the Neanderthal or, rather, the Paleoanthropoid. The tall stature of the *almasty* is found in fossil Palistinian men very similar to the Neanderthals (Skhuh IV and V) and in the Neanderthals of Shanidar in Kurdistan, in Iraq and thus in regions relatively close to the Caucasus.

It would thus appear that the fossil species of

the Caucasus belongs either to the human phylum, or to a parallel and neighboring line. Nevertheless, in the present state of the research, respect for scientific rigor does not permit the establishment of a diagnostic. Is it necessary to dwell upon the repercussions which the discovery and study of the *almasty* would have in the human sciences?

**“A CREATURE IN WHICH
ANIMALITY AND HUMANITY
APPEAR TO BE COMBINED”**

This is how Professor Piveteau², member of the Academy of Sciences, honorary professor in the College de France, describes the almasty, in Reflections on this hominid of the Caucasus, addressed to Dr. M.-J. Koffmann in 1987, and which we publish here.

The concordance of the eyewitness reports collected by Dr. Marie-Jeanne Koffmann and the fact that they come from different and disparate kinds of cultures, pleads in favor of their veracity. In fact, one cannot see in them the expression of ideologies or of a priori scientific views but, rather, the translation of unsophisticated observations, expressing simply what has been seen. The existence of the singular being thus described thus does not seem to be open to dispute.

If one cannot claim to give a precise description of it, it is nonetheless possible to establish certain essential traits of it, and one is then in a major quandary when it is attempted to place it within the framework of classical taxonomy. It is definitely a Primate, and its

bipedalism leads it to be placed in the line of the hominids, that is to say, in the line of which the ultimate member is man.

According to the different eyewitness reports, this bipedalism does not involve a gait similar to that of man but, rather suggests that of *Australopithecus*, a hominid which is not man. Moreover, the great length of the arms can be considered as an archaic disposition, that is to say, pre-human. Thus, by its gait and the proportions of its members, the hominid of the Caucasus may be said scarcely to have attained the human stage.

But with regard to the paleontologist, whose point of view we adopt here, how would he see the hominid become man? In such an investigation, the anatomical criterion has its importance, although the psychic criterion nevertheless appears to us to be preponderant. Reflection, language, society, all of these are essential characteristics of man.

Seen from outside, conscious thought is attested to by the fabrication of tools, the result of intentional work. Was the hominid of the Caucasus capable of making tools? Nothing, it would seem, in the observations reported until now, would permit this to be answered in the affirmative. A more extensive study of the sites of habitation would thus be necessary.

Did it have articulate language? Only simple vocalizing has been reported, but never true language. On the other hand, it seems that there is, if not a social organization, at least certain modes of grouping together.

If the authenticity of the hominid of the Caucasus is definitively established, we shall find ourselves in the presence of a creature in which animality and humanity appear to be combined. Concerning its exact nature, that is to say, with regard to its place in human evolution, we can only set forth hypotheses.

It evokes the myth of the wildman, which has never ceased to haunt our thoughts. It is still represented, in this enlightened century, by a hairy body and a mixture of animal and human traits showing how vague are the frontiers of

² Eminent anthropologist, author of numerous works on the evolution of man, Professor Piveteau died recently. His students and disciples, who have always been impressed by the extent of his knowledge and his remarkable talent of synthesis, as well as all others of those who have known him, will remember him as a modest and generous scientist, always in quest of a truth, very difficult to grasp, when it concerns the origins of man

the human race. In our present scientific representation we could consider it either as a failure of hominization or as a degraded being having lost the most characteristic attributes of normal man. But, one must not forget that nature is more fertile and richer than our imagination.

These vain hypotheses must give way to a truly scientific study, and no one appears better qualified to undertake it and to carry it through successfully than Dr. M.-J. Koffmann. I desire ardently, and I am sure that it is also the wish of the French scientific community, that Madame Koffmann be able to obtain all of the means which will permit her to shed light on the strange and thrilling problem raised by the enigmatic being of the Caucasus.

Paris, 10 June 1987

Jean Piveteau

Member of the Academy of Sciences,

Member of the Royal Academy of Belgium

RESPONSE OF DR M.-J. KOFFMANN

I have been struck, for example, by your remark on the bipedalism of the *almasty*, “which does not involve... a gait similar to that of man but, rather, evokes that of the *Australopithecus*.” Now, in the several eyewitness reports which you had (thirteen among hundreds!), there was described only a calm gait, which already differs slightly from that of man. I have never been able to describe in writing the gait of the *almasty* running, except for the unanimous affirmation that it is extremely rapid. My informants, even the most cultivated ones, have always been totally incapable of describing its running to me. Their confused explanations are no more intelligible than their maladroit efforts to imitate this manner of projection forward by powerful bounds. I think of this Russian engineer who, while driving his car in broad daylight, surprised an *almasty* at a turn in a narrow mountain track,

where it found itself trapped between two walls. He held it, at 40 km/hr, at the level of the headlight on the right wing, for more than 400 m, when the creature finally was able to leap through an opening into the forest. Although an experienced observer of nature and animals, and a graduate of two advanced schools, he also was not able to explain to me the manner in which this being ran, even though he watched it intently at a distance of 2 m. He could see the powerful thigh muscles moving under the fur, and the creature gave an impression of prodigious force. Like other eyewitnesses, this educated man noted that the running was done by bounds, but he was not capable of giving me a picture of it, either by imitation (“they were not movements accessible to man”), or, above all, in writing, as I had, asked him.

Tools: Apart from the use of stones, which it throws with great precision, I have no information on the fabrication of tools, except for the description of a sort of club which was found, along with the remains of food, beside a nest in a cavern, and which certainly belonged to the *almasty*. The two hunters, having quickly left the scene, soon from the opposite slope saw the proprietor return to his home. “The handle of the club was gnawed with teeth, so that it was more comfortable to hold it in the hand.” It is scarcely necessary, however, to go seek out a hominid for this exploit – the simplest chimpanzee knows how to do even better.

On the other hand, the *almasty* knows how to bring to life and to maintain a wood fire which had been left by shepherds to die out. My data on these facts are absolutely certain, for it is easy to understand my stupefaction and my agitation when, in a totally unconcerned manner, they were recounted to me for the first time, to say nothing as well of the scrupulous prudence which I devoted to assuring myself of their reality.

The “social” groups formerly were numerically very important, forming sorts of bands. Let us not forget that we are today, alas,

present at the end of the species, of which the last few representatives wander, solitary, among the debris of their former area of habitation. Perhaps, in other regions of the

globe, the situation is not as tragic as in the Caucasus, but everywhere the quantitative degradation is evident.

Dr. Marie-Jeanne Koffmann was born in France in 1919, but returned to Russia in 1935. as a surgeon in the hospitals of Moscow, anatomist and mountaineer. She commanded a battalion of alpine troops during WW II. Koffmann was a member of the Soviet Union's official expedition to the Pamirs in 1958, as physician. She concentrated her hominological research in the North Caucasus, where she spent decades exploring, collectiong ethnographic evidence, modern eyewitness accounts, as well as documenting footprint evidence. Her initial findings were announced to the Russian Geographical Society of the Academy of Sciences (of which she is a member), in 1966. Koffmann has served a term as president of the Cryptozoology Association of the USSR, and was honorary member of the International Society of Cryptozoology. She now resides in her native France.



SELECTED FIGURES

“Reconstruction by Burian of the *Pithecanthropus* of Java, according to the excavations of Eugene Dubois, military physician and Dutch paleontologist (1958-1940).”



“Imprint of an almasty foot (the track included some 20), removed whole after consolidation of the soil. Valley of the Malka. March 1978.”



“Imprint of a foot from the mountains of Ala Taou, in Soviet Asia. A size 42 would end at the level of the little toe.”