

**Uniwersytet Warszawski**

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## **The Circassian Question;**

**The formation of linguistic and cultural identity in the Caucasus  
from the mid-nineteenth century to modern times**

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## **Abstract**

Historically, the North Caucasus has introduced the peoples, whose numbers are bounded to some hundreds, and whose mother tongues are different from each other. Beyond this ethnic and linguistic intricacy, the cultural schema has been an extra element to complicate the regional issues. All these commons have constructed a style of living, or a mutual and unique identity surrounding the peoples of the North Caucasus which called the *Mountainous Identity* (Grotsy). The Circassians are among the most populated nation or ethnic in the region. The changing political geographies have worked to influence local constructs of identity and place of Circassian in their history linguistically and culturally. To explore how place factors into the construction of ethnonational identity in the course of common language and culture by examining the concept of homeland, is one of the first aims of my research.

In general, this study aimed to investigate how the Circassians have used from their language and culture in different domains to establish a specific ethnolinguistic identity in the North Caucasus and to examine the cultural elements that they have preserved since the 19<sup>th</sup> century to modern times. It also tried to disclose the effects that facilitated them in protecting some of the Circassian cultural sights. The cultural elements for having a common identity that is mainly preserved were cuisine, folklore, music, and celebrations. On the other hand, they preserved *Adige Xabse* that is a group of social refined manners that are based on respect, honor, hospitality, responsibility, self-control, discipline, and good character, which is passed naturally to generations. Historical awareness was concerned with major 19<sup>th</sup>-century historical events that mainly reflected the suffering of their ancestors.

Therefore, this thesis focused on the Circassian history starting from the Caucasian war in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and chronologically tried to survey their aspect toward their identity under the main topic of the Circassian Question in the modern term. Although the Circassian diaspora constitutes a significant part of Circassian Question, the actual history of this nation is disproportionately not well known both within the Circassian diaspora and within the Circassians in Circassia at large. This thesis investigates the evaluation of Circassian linguistic and cultural identity and diaspora from a theoretical, historical and practical view and evaluates the role of the various domestic and international factors in the course of current issues in the North Caucasus.



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## 0 Chapter - Introduction

### 0.1 Preface

The thesis includes a comparatively high number of footnotes, figures, tables, and maps. This is partly due to the general lack of knowledge on Circassian Question and their historical background. It is also an acknowledgment of the importance of them when researching into the Circassians as dispersed ethnicity that often has been forgotten or disappeared from many history books in, for instance, Russia, Europe, and the Caucasus. I hope in the future with the publishing of this dissertation, we will see more researches and papers on the Circassian Question in other academic centers.

At the first, I should draw your attention that by holding the Winter Olympic Games of Sochi in 2014, a lot of international attention came toward the Circassian Question and it was a kind of retake off this issue in the modern time. As a result, the planning of the Winter Olympics, an international mega-event, has generated an acceleration of an already ongoing transnational of the Circassian Question. A number of new Circassian organizations have appeared and a number of claims have been made a focus on a variety of issues ranging from new options for repatriation to the homeland to calls for recognition of the forced exile as an act of genocide in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Another phenomenal issue, which will be focused on the Circassian Question in this dissertation, is the ethnolinguistic or the cultural linguistics. Actually, it is first time among Circassian studies, that a researcher uses the concept of ethnolinguistic, which is a field of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and culture and how different ethnic groups can make their identities as a nation or as an ethnicity in the modern concept. It is the combination of ethnology, history, and linguistics with the term of Oriental studies. Cultural Linguistics draws on and expands the theoretical and analytical advancements in cognitive wisdom and anthropology. It examines how various features of ethnic group languages encode cultural conceptualizations, including cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors. Therefore, it is not only studying the specific linguistic. Main parts are historical background, cultural & social phenomena, and its relation with external and internal players who can effect on the formation of an identity.

## 0.2 Prelude

The Circassian is one of the ethnic groups in the Northwest of the Caucasus, Northeast of the Black Sea and Southern Russia who speak in Circassian, a branch of Caucasus northwestern languages. This ethnic group is a descendant of Caucasus Adyghean-Abkhazian, which are dispersed in three north Caucasus republics namely Kabardin-Balkar republic, Karachay-Cherkess republic, and Adyghea republic. The Circassians today form a minority of 800,000 people in the North Caucasus region of Russia, while three to six million Circassians are scattered over many countries, especially in the states of the former Ottoman Empire. The contemporary Circassian ethnolinguistic was formed amidst some geopolitical events, such as the constant conflict between the Russian and Ottoman Empires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the conquest of Russian in the Caucasus, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and Russian Empire, establishment of the Soviet Union, World War II, and finally collapse of the Soviet Union. Only ten percent of the Circassian population remained on its homeland in the Caucasus by the end of the nineteenth century and the rest counts as the Diaspora.

The Circassian Question enjoys unprecedented interest by those who are interested in the Circassian and Caucasian affairs alike. It seems that an international and regional attention highlights the Circassians, its track and its implications, because of positive elements which influenced the course of events in the past few years, as well as a result of consecutive developments that have happened and still taking place to the Caucasian issues in general and the Circassian Question in particular.

It has become possible to see and follow-up those who seek on exploring the Circassian topic in a wider scope than it was in the past. That can be described as unprecedented Circassian renaissance and vigilance since the end of the Russian – Circassian War in the year 1864, as the formation of their linguistic and cultural identity, whether at homeland or in the Diaspora lands.

In the process of identity shaping, language functions as a tool that maintains the cultural identity that the language simulates. Actually, the distinctiveness qualities that a culture possessed, for example, its own value, custom, principles, faith, ideology and the ways of life are embedding in its own language. We should consider that the relationship between language and identity is embedded in a culture of Circassian to the variety of status in the Circassian social hierarchy.

I think studying on the topic of Circassian Question in the light of linguistic and cultural identity formation is one of the new term researches in the Oriental Studies and Caucasian

Studies, which so far has not been as the main issue of scholars in this regard. I tried to use the historical and social data in the process of ethnolinguistic from the mid-nineteenth century to modern times. This era was the most efficient time for the Circassian while they could have formed their linguistic and cultural identity.

However, the language plays a role as a cultural identity, which is debatable, because there are some rare cases when some individuals do not identify themselves as an ethnic group even though they speak the language of that ethnic. It can be concluded that ethnolinguistic is not the only tools that embrace identity; there are some other external factors that help the process of identity formation which I will focus on those as well.

### **0.3 Objective**

This study tries to answer, primary research questions emerge and many related questions, which are nested within each primary question. Although the primary questions remained as the backbone of my research, related questions have changed as the research progressed and new findings and perspectives were discovered. It is the first incentive of every researcher that wants to study and research concerning unknown northern Caucasus ethnic groups and their relation with culture and linguistic identity. We should not forget that the linguistic identity is largely a political matter and languages are flags of allegiance of the specific nation and ethnic. This means that the instrumental view of language and even culture is fundamentally flawed.

This is a visible and parent goal in research to open a new way in principle researches in recognition arena regarding cultural and historical relations with an ethnic group of the northern Caucasus and Eastern Europe especially in the case of Circassian Question. Meaning that studying, recognizing, and even collecting historical and cultural data of Circassian, which have had substantial effects on some historical eras of Russia, opens the way to our next questions regarding the different field of quality, position, and circumstances of the presence of ethnolinguistic identity formation among this ethnic group in the Caucasus.

Actually, language use and identity are conceptualized rather differently from a sociocultural perspective on human action. Here, identity is not seen as personal, fixed, and inherent to the individual. Rather, it is identified as socially constituted; a reflexive, dynamic outcome of the social, historical and political grounds of an individual's lived skill. This point of view has helped to set innovative directions for research in practical linguistics.

Therefore, I can add that the final aim of this thesis is twofold – to examine the Circassian Question in the broad of ethnolinguistic context and trace the transformation of its perception by the world community. For achieving this, it is needful to recognize the factors that affected the cover of the Circassian question and the actors that characterize the formation of the public viewpoint.

Since the research is descriptive and narrative I refuse to bring up a specified question because this method clarifies the intended question which is quality and characteristics of the unknown that means recognition regarding the Circassian Question and formation their identity in the specific era. However, in order to explore the above-described themes in their identical context, I have identified the following these main research tasks:

- Recognition the Circassian an effective ethnolinguistic group in the Caucasus with orientalism views;
- Studying social and historical fields of Circassian Question based on their linguistic and cultural identity;
- Studying reasons of Circassian diaspora presence and their effects as well based on the reaction of their host society to the Circassian Question specifically after the winter Olympic of Sochi 2014.

The overall purpose in writing this thesis is to unveil, present and discuss the rising transnational identity of the Circassians, composed of different but related indigenous minorities in the Caucasus or in Russia as well as diaspora groups in several countries.

#### **0.4 Methodological Assumptions**

Originally, this research is a type of descriptive and narrative research that deals with the identification, quality, and circumstances of the subject. The main criterion in this research is obtaining information and data, analyzing, and then writing them by narrative history from mid-nineteenth century about Circassian Question relevant to their cultural and linguistic identity until the modern era.

The theme of this research covers the period when the so-called Eastern Question became the most important agenda of the Great Powers. Therefore, Caucasus was not just a part of the contest among the regional powers, but it also became an aspect of the Great Power politics.

The key methodological elements of my research process have been interviews with key actors; field studies; conference participation; the collection of materials; website pages of Circassian organizations, including social media; various other media representations of the



Circassian Question. My main working language has been English, supplemented with some Arabic, Turkish and Russian.

## **0.5 Structure**

The structure of the thesis is set by an attempt to give the periodization of the phenomena in question, basing on the principle of historicism and using the comparative analysis. Discovering the changes in the conception of the Circassian Question was made possible due to the use of discourse analysis, and the constructive approach provided the recognition of the main players. The study is based on a broad span of materials in Russian, English and Turkish languages, containing official documents and public statements. The chapters constituting this thesis consist of an individual subject that all, in differing ways, address the ongoing formation of Circassian cultural identity.

There are many both thematic and geographical overlaps in the different chapters, as all investigations behind these were driven by a curiosity to understand the sprawling Circassian Question as it has developed in various local and national contexts as well as transnationally in the context of linguistic and cultural identity. I have tried to avoid overlaps and repetitions but since most chapters were written independently before acceptance of outline was planned. Summarily, the introduction chapters (0, 1 and 2) is almost 40% of the body of thesis and then contribution to body of knowledge is almost 50% (3, 4, and some part of 5) and most data collections used in chapter 5 (also 3 and 4) which is almost 10% and finally, analysis of data and body will be in chapter 6 with less 10% of whole text.

In the main body of the dissertation, I mention that people that have multilingual background face complex issues in adapting and assimilating their language to a cultural identity that they want to be identified with. People create their linguistic structure to bear a resemblance to those of the group with which from time to time they wish to identify. Cultural identity is outlined as the product of social and historical background that is built when an individual categorizes themselves a group, in addition to social ground and ethnically adapted to rational structures in a particular society. Language serves as a tool that admits one's identity and functions as a mean of unifying an ethnolinguistic community that shares the same communal identity.

Collective and communal identity refers to the sense of belonging when an individual identifies himself/herself to a group or nation. If the role of language in uniting a cultural community is analyzed from a different perspective, language can act as a tool that divides the people in a cultural community. It also acts as a tool to unify the people in one cultural

society who have the same collective and plural identity. We often do not realize how much language has influenced our life. Therefore, it is important for us to value our language because it carries our cultural, historical and social identity. In fact, without a language, individuals will lose its own collective identity. This research is descriptive research in principle that devotes to study cultural and historical fields of Circassians in the Caucasus and their reaction to their identity and study of the political implications on the Circassian Question in the context of ethnolinguistic.

## **0.6 Hypotheses**

There is no hypothesis in this method because I do not have any premises of the subject and I will introduce and recognize the topic in the process of writing. This type of research presents addressee miscellaneous cultural and historical information as field and library data and it cannot be devoted to analyzing cultural and historical issues scientifically this subject in Circassian Question. Thus, the thesis foundation is based on two principles: description and definition (quoted research).

## **0.7 Limitations**

Unfortunately, lack of field studies by researchers in the area of regional studies about the northern Caucasus has presented limited and incorrect information for pre-studying ethnology and orientalism researches in the Caucasus that this deficiency must be decreased by establishing a cultural and scientific relationship with the region. The field studies problems, which can be pointed out, is a security issue that usually caused the delay in the continuation of travel and research. Lack of direct access to the region by air and ground. It is necessary to mention that it has rarely given traffic permit to a foreigner in the region and usually it is along with various questions and discourtesy.

In addition, it is difficult to communicate with native people and they are not pleased with speaking with foreigners. There is little information about the background of this group in library resources, lack of using script caused most information about them to be written by foreigners especially neighbors that these data only have devoted to introducing their culture and geography or at last has pointed to the part of the contemporary history simultaneous with writing the text. That has been written begrudgingly and is not so reliable because of hostility and quarrel among the Caucasus ethnic groups. Dispersion of this group from north of black sea to the south of Mediterranean Sea caused difficulty in this research so that the author has done several studies regarding the Circassian of Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel,

Balkan peninsula, Egypt and Iran so as to this recognition approaches scientific resources more than ever. It's worthy of mention there is a lack of precise academic resources in orientalism centers regarding Circassia that unfortunately this group hasn't been introduced and recognized properly so far.

Totally, the problems of this research summarized as follows:

- Lack of chronology school and writing among the Circassian until recent eras.
- Lack of similar language and literature among the different Circassian tribes and parallel inferences of different ethnic groups.
- A wide dispersion in the northern Caucasus in three republics and two provinces and dispersion in the world from Libya and Egypt to America.
- Lack of appropriate books in orientalism library
- Lack of appropriate principle researches regarding Circassian culture and history in academic centers.
- Lack of simple access to field study because of long distance and security issues.
- Contradictory data in historical books and resources.

## **0.8 Result**

Finally, it is predictable to present world academic centers a complete set of Circassian question and all issues related to this case, which has not been researched in this regard so far. That it has been tried to use all of important sources and resources about Circassian. This research is a new way about ethnology and orientalism of the northern Caucasus region and will be a new gate for upcoming principle researches in this regard.

In this regard, the Circassian question should be located in the picture of the so-called Eastern Question without ignoring, however, I surveyed on the social, linguistic and cultural identity Circassians based on historical data.

Although the Circassian civil movement and the Circassian problematic as a whole have attracted many researchers, there are still not enough of the objective generalizing works that provide a retrospective picture of the development of the Circassian Question in relation to the place, time and processes of both regional and international significance.



# 1 Chapter - Human Geography & Ethnography

## 1.1 Introduction

The Circassian<sup>1</sup> is a generic noun that refers to the people of the Northwest Caucasus as an ethnic group. Their human geography and ethnography thence are important to be reviewed that has been highlighted over the past five hundred years in the history of the Caucasus, and it can be a preliminary study to answer the *Circassian Question* and also identify the most important issues relevant to the *Circassian Question*. Ethnographically, the Circassians are known by themselves as ‘Adyghe’<sup>2</sup> who are native to the land, which is named *Circassia*<sup>3</sup>. They originally inhabited the area of the Northwest Caucasus, though after the Russian conquest of 1864 almost fully half of them immigrated to the Ottoman Empire’s territory. Nowadays, those Circassians who stayed in Russia mostly have spread in three republics of *Adyghea*<sup>4</sup>, *Kabardin-Balkar*<sup>5</sup>, *Karachay-Cherkess*<sup>6</sup> as well as two Krai<sup>7</sup> of *Krasnodar*<sup>8</sup> and *Stavropol*<sup>9</sup> under the *North Caucasian Federal District*<sup>10</sup> in the Russian Federation. Religiously, most of them currently are *Sunni* Muslim of *Hanafi* School<sup>11</sup> and much more than other Caucasian Muslims are depend on the mosque and regional *Mufti*<sup>12</sup>, so I can call their ‘*Muslimness*’ is mosque-centered faith.

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1. Pronunciation: in UK: /sərkæsi.ən/, in US: /sərkæsan/, in Russian: Черкесы Cherkesi,

2. In Circassian: Адыгэхэр Adygekher, in Russian: Адыгу Adigi

3. In Circassian: Адыгэ Хэку Adige kheku, in Russian: Черкэсия Cherkesia, in Georgian: ჩერქეზეთი Cherkhezeti, in Arabic: شيركاسيا Shirkasia, in Turkish: Çerkesya Cherkeisa

4. In Russian: Республика Адыгея Respublika Adigeya

5. In Russian: Кабардино-Балкарская Республика Kabardino-Balkarskaya Respublika

6. In Russian: Карачаево-Черкесская Республика Karachayevo-Cherkesskaya Respublika

7. A krai or kray in Russian: край, was a sort of geographical administrative division in the Russian Empire and in the Russian SFSR. It is also one of the types of the federal subjects of current Russia.

8. In Russian: Краснодарский край Krasnodarsky kray

9. In Russian: Ставропольский край Stavropolsky kray

10. In Russian: Северо-Кавказский федеральный округ Severo-Kavkazsky federalny okrug

11. In Arabic: حنفي Hanafi, is one of the four religious Sunni Islamic schools of jurisprudence.

12. In Arabic: مفتي Mufti is an Islamic scholar who interprets and expounds Islamic law.

The Circassians speak the *Circassian Language*, which is a Northwest Caucasian language that is called *Abkhazo-Adyghean*<sup>13</sup>. The Circassian language itself is divided into two official dialects that include the literary languages of *Adyghean* and *Kabardian*<sup>14</sup>. Western and Lower dialect often called the *Adyghean*, and an Eastern and Upper one, the *Kabardian* (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 245). The first Circassian written were modified *Perso-Arabic* script, then the *Latin* was adopted, and finally, in the late 1930s, the *Cyrillic* was used under the Soviet era. Currently efforts are underway to devise a new Latin-based script among the young generation and some elites to get understandable and readable for every Circassian, specifically for Diasporas who do not know Russian (Ibid: p. 254).

The Circassian people consists the twelve tribal communities in their human geography: *Abzakh*, *Besleney*, *Bzhedugh*, *Hatuqwai*, *Kabardian*, *Mamkhegh*, *Natukhai*, *Shapsug*, *Temirgoy*, *Ubykh*, *Yegezuqwai*, and *Zhaney* that the names of dialects also directly come from their tribe name (Gammer, 2004: p. 67). I should mention that the current Circassian flag where each star on the green and gold means one of their tribes (Figure. 01). However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Circassians were designated as the following: *Adygheans*, *Cherkessians*, *Kabardians*, and *Shapsugians* under Soviet Union administrative divisions, although all the four are essentially the same people as we called them ‘Circassians’.

Almost 800,000 Circassians remained in Circassia and the Russian Federation. According to the 2010 Russian Census recorded 718,727 Circassians registered including 516,826 are *Kabardians*, 124,835 are other *Adygheans*, 73,184 are *Cherkessians*, and 3,882 *Shapsugians*<sup>15</sup> (Census, 2013) (Table. 01). Among diaspora, it is estimated about 2 - 4 million populations mostly in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt (Mullen & Atticus, 1997: pp. 67-69) (Table. 02).

Racially, they are comprised of European type race in the anthropology. In fact, based on Encyclopedia of World Cultures by David Levinson a lot of them have blue eyes and blond or light hair, whereas others have dark hair with light complexions. Some groups show a propensity toward long, aquiline faces and dolichocephalic heads, whereas others tend toward round faces (Colarusso, 1994) (Figure. 02). However, the Circassians are a mountain people with strongly hierarchical social structure and aristocratic tradition, famed within the Caucasus and beyond for personal beauty and martial skills (Kosven, 1961: pp. 142-57).

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13. It called also *Circassic*, or sometimes *Pontic*.

14. In Russian: Кабардинцы *Kabardintsi*

15. In Russian: шапсуги *Shapsugi*, Turkish: Şapsıqlar *Shapsiqlar*

Unfortunately, little is known of their origins and early history, because lack of the written texts. Besides, the European travelers noted that the Mountaineers did not have their own writing system. In recent years, the Circassian communities around the world tried to manage their identity and survival subjects, also worrying about their future. Re-engaging and recalling their past with all its honorable and painful details requires the necessity to follow-up effects that show how to find a solution to the *Circassian Question* with identifying the perpetrators and selecting the appropriate mechanism of applying the related rules for the realization and recognition of their legal rights.

In this chapter, I try to identify these people and land based on ethnography methodology according to the primary and secondary sources, which are available Online, and in libraries. Therefore, I focused on three parts, first the territory of historical homeland of Circassians, second I will go for introducing this person as an ethnic and a nation and then finally I will survey the ethnopolitical issues in the North Caucasus regarding Circassians' activities.

## 1.2 Circassia - Homeland

The historical homeland of the Circassians by themselves called '*Xekwzch*' that means '*Old Country*' wherein all sources in English used Circassia (Chisholm, 1911: pp. 380-381). The land of Circassia pronounces and names in different format in each language of the region, for example in Russian: *Cherkesia*, in Georgian: *Cherkezeti*, in Arabic: *Shirkasia*, in Turkish: *Cherkesia*, and in Persian: *Cherkesestan* that is referred to the region in the Northwest Caucasus and along the Northeast coast of the Black Sea. According to the Greek sources, another historical name was used for this land and its people as *Zyghoy*, who was described by *Strabo*<sup>16</sup> as a nation and country in the north of Colchis<sup>17</sup>. The first mention of the name 'Circassia' was made by *John de Plano Carpini*<sup>18</sup>, the representative or envoy of *Pope Innocent IV*<sup>19</sup> to the Great Khan of the Mongols in 1245 AD (Avezac, 1839: p.776) (Table. 03).

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16. Strabo in Greek: Στράβων Strábōn; (63 BC - 24 AD) was a Greek geographer, philosopher, and historian who lived in Asia Minor during the transitional period of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire.

17. Colchis in Georgian: კოლხეთი *Kolkheti*; in Greek Κολχίς *Kolkhis* was an ancient kingdom and region on the coast of the Black Sea, located in present-day in the west of Georgia.

18. Giovanni da Pian del Carpine in English as John of Pian de Carpine, John of Plano Carpini or Joannes de Plano (1185 – 1252 AD)

19. Pope Innocent IV in Latin: Innocentius IV (1195 - 1254), born Sinibaldo Fieschi, was Pope of the Catholic Church from 25 June 1243 to his death in 1254.

It is very difficult to visualize the borders of Circassia today, despite limited geographic resources and contradictory contents. This point should consider that there never was a union state in this territory, and only the tribes with a complex social structure managed the country. Nevertheless, it is possible to delineate historical Circassia, a term used to designate *Adyghean* lands before the commencement of the *Russian-Caucasian War*<sup>20</sup> at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Geographically, I can summarize the historical Circassia where extended from the coastal area of Black Sea at the entry of the Azov Sea, thence over the Caucasian Range and southeastward along its eastern downhill into the weathering of the *Baksan*<sup>21</sup>, *Malka*<sup>22</sup>, and *Kuma*<sup>23</sup> rivers, then into the Kabardian plain in the north of the Terek River<sup>24</sup>, thereupon northwestward to the path of the Kuban<sup>25</sup>, and along the south bank of the Kuban back to the Taman Peninsula<sup>26</sup> (Colarusso, 1994) (Map. 01).

This original homeland was bounded on the west by the Black Sea; on the northwest by the Crimea; on the north by Ukraine; on the east by the territory of the Chechens and Daghestanis; to the south by Ossetian, and Georgian highlands; and to the southwest by Abkhazian land<sup>27</sup>. The area engirded was more than 100,000 sq. km, almost a quarter of the size of the Caucasus. Additionally, there are some historical maps of Circassia which made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, can help to visualize their territory (Map. 02).

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20. Russian-Caucasian War in Russian: Кавказская война *Kavkazskaya vojna* was from 1817 to 1864 as an invasion of the Caucasus by the Imperial Russian Army.

21. In Russian: река Баксан *Reka Baksan*, also known as Azau River (Length: 173 km) mostly located in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria which flows east-northeast and joins the Malka River.

22. In Russian: река Малка *Reka Malka*, also known as Balyksu River (Length: 210 km) mostly located in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, which forms the northwest part of the Terek River basin.

23. In Russian: река Кума *Reka Kuma*, a major river (Length: 802 km) in the Northern Caucasus, flows through Southern Russia into the Caspian Sea, mostly located in in the Republic of Karachay-Cherkess.

24. In Russian: река Терек *Reka Terek*, a major river (Length: 623 km) in the Northern Caucasus, flows through Georgia and Southern Russia into the Caspian Sea, mostly located in the Republic of North Ossetia.

25. In Russian: река Куба́нь *Reka Kuban*, a major river (Length: 660 km) in the Northern Caucasus, flows through Southern Russia into the Black Sea, mostly located in the Krasnodar Krai.

26. In Russian: Тама́нский полуо́стров, *Tamanskiy poluostrov*, a peninsula in the present-day in Krasnodar Krai, borders on the north with the Azov Sea, on the west with the Strait of Kerch and on the south with the Black Sea.

27. In Russian: А́бхазы *Abkhazi* are a Northwest Caucasian ethnic group, mainly living in Abkhazia and a disputed region on the Black Sea coast.



In this land, homogeneous peoples, such as Circassians, Abazins<sup>28</sup> and Abkhazians, lived together with heterogeneous ethnic groups such as Ossetians<sup>29</sup>, Balkars<sup>30</sup>, Karachays<sup>31</sup>, Tatars<sup>32</sup> and Cossacks<sup>33</sup>. In addition, Sochi<sup>34</sup> is considered by many Circassians as their historical capital city (Economist, 2012) (Map. 03).

### 1.2.1 Etymology

As I mentioned above the Circassians refer to themselves as *Adyghe*<sup>35</sup>. It should be noted the self-designation of a group of people is the first term, whereas outsiders to refer to them specifically from their neighbors use the second. The name of *Adyghe*, according to Edmund Spencer<sup>36</sup> who traveled through Circassia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is from *Atté* in Circassian language means ‘height’ to signify a mountaineer or a highlander person, and *Ghéi* which means ‘sea’ that totally we can translate and signify ‘a group of people settlement and inhabiting in the mountainous land near the sea coast’ (Spencer, 2008: p. 06, 164). In this regard, *Loui Loewe* who collected the Dictionary of the Circassian Language in 1854 had the same opinion about etymology of *Adyghean* word (Loewe, 1854: p. 05).

However, the name of Circassian has occasionally applied to *Adyghe* as well as *Abaza* in the historical texts (Latham, 1862: p. 279). Actually, it represents a Latinization of *Siraces*, the Greek name for the north of *Colchis*, as well as called *Shirkess* by Khazars and later used *Cherkess*, as the Turkic name for the *Adyghea*, and originated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with

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28. Abazin or Abazinians in Russian: Абазины *Abazini*, are an ethnic group of the Northwest Caucasus, closely related to the Abkhaz and Circassian people.

29. Ossetians or Ossetes in Russian: Осетины *Osetini*, are an Iranian ethnic group of the Caucasus Mountains.

30. Balkars in Russian: Балкарцы *Balkartsi*, are a Turkic people of the North Caucasus.

31. In Russian: Карачаевцы *Karachavetsi*, are a Turkic people of the North Caucasus.

32. In Russian: татары *Tatari*, are a Turkic people living mainly among Slavic people who was applied to a variety of Turco-Mongol and semi-nomadic states. More recently, the term refers mostly to the people who speak one of the Turkic languages among Slavic communities.

33. In Russian: казаки *kazaki*, are a group of East Slavic-speaking people who are mostly living in Southern Russia and in South-Eastern Ukraine.

34. In Russian: Сочи *Sotchi* is a city in Krasnodar Krai, located on the Northeast of Black Sea coast near the border of Georgia/Abkhazia.

35. Also as Adige, Adyga, Adyge Adygei, Adyghe, Attéghéi and in Circassian: Адыгэ *Adygè*, in Russian: Адыгу *Adigi*

36. Captain Edmund Spencer was a prolific British travel writer of the mid-nineteenth century. Name of his book: *Travels in the Western Caucasus*, in 1836

medieval *Genoese* merchants and travelers to Circassia. (Latham, 1859: p. 50) On the other hand, folk etymology explains the name of *Cherkess* as a meaning of ‘warrior cutter’ or ‘soldier cutter’, from the Turkic words of *çeri* that means soldier and *kesmek* that means cut (Klaproth, 1814: p. 558; Taitbout, 1837: p. 05). In Turkey, *Cherkess* name is used in reference to all descendants of the people who came from the North Caucasus in the 19th century as *Muhajer*<sup>37</sup>, even including Ossetians and Chechens (Atham, 1859: p. 50).

Nevertheless, there is another opinion that Circassian name derives from the name of the earlier people, *Kerkets* which we can find in some Arabic, Persian, Georgian and Armenian sources (Lavrov, 1956: p. 40). For example, the famous Muslim traveler, *Al-Massoudi*<sup>38</sup>, visited the Northwest Caucasus in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and described the Circassians, whom he referred to as *Kashak* or *Keshek*. In the middle ages, the Russians used to refer to them by the name *Kasogi*, later *Kossogh*, which is related to Old Georgian *Kashaqi* and Old Armenian *Gashk*. The Ossetians still call them *Kasag*, so we can conclude that the name of Circassia was referred to as *Kasaxia* in Byzantine Greek texts (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 11).

Despite a common self-designation, Russians took the name of *Cherkess* for all Circassians before the Soviet Union. However, later and based on new geographical and political divisions, they called them separately *Kabardian*, *Cherkessian*, *Shapsugian* and *Adyghean*. In Persian, however, the word is applied generally to peoples living beyond Derbent city in Dagestan and all over the North Caucasus (Minorsky, 1943: p. 163). Even by referrals to ‘The History of Mubarak Ghazani’ written by *Rashid al-Din Faḍlullah Hamadani*<sup>39</sup> in the 13th Century, *Cherkess* means four<sup>40</sup> tribes or four *Keshek* (Faḍlullāh Hamadānī, 2016: p. 134).

The native self-designation was first recorded in the fifth century BC. It was explained as a corruption of an older term *Antixe*, the *Ants* being people thought to be ancestral to Adyghe, and *-xe* the plural suffix. The *n* was elided, the *t* transformed to *d*, and *x* turned into a soft *g*. It is perhaps related to the old name *Zyghoy*, which Strabo used to designate the Circassians. *Zixi* or *Zyghoy* was the Latin and Greek appellation, which was first recorded in the fourth century AD by Roman historians and travelers. So based on this theory, we can say on the

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37. *Muhajer* مهاجر is an Arabic word that means immigrant.

38. Or Al-Mas‘udi in Arabic: أبو الحسن علي بن الحسين بن علي المسعودي *Abu al-hasan Alī ibn al-husayn ibn Alī al-Masūdī*; (896–956) was a Muslim historian and geographer from Baghdad.

39. Also known as Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlullāh Hamadānī in Persian: رشیدالدین فضل‌الله همدانی, (1247–1318) was a public official, historian and physician in Ilkhanate-ruled of Persia.

40. *Chehar* in Persian

contrary of the previous opinion, the name of *Cherkess* can be a Turkic corruption of the Greek name of *Kerxetai*, or it may mean ‘Bandit’. It was recorded in 1551 AD by *Giorgio Interiano*<sup>41</sup>, one of the principal historians of the Genoese period (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 12).

*Circassia* and the *Circassians* nouns used to evoke many romantic notions of beauty, bravery, and courage in western literature. However, different names in different periods, even the proximity of some names, as well as abundant names in small geography, have made the inaccuracy of the original names and history of many Caucasian peoples in a hint of ambiguity (Table. 04).

### 1.2.2 Geographical Landscape

Geopolitically, Circassia is located in Eastern Europe and geographically, in the Northwest Caucasus near the northeastern Black Sea coast. It almost covers the entire fertile plateau and the steppe of the northwestern region of the Caucasus (Map. 04).

In eastern Circassia, where precipitation ranges between 600-720 mm per annum, forests are interspersed with mountain pasture and steppe. The average annual temperature in *Kabardin-Balkar* is about 10 degrees. Near *Nalchik*<sup>42</sup>, the climate is continental and toward the south, as far as the forests on the foothills the climate is moderate. Just a little higher up the mountains, the climate is harsh and sharply divided, with hot summers and cold winters (Jaimukha, 2001: p. 27).

In the western Circassia, annual rainfall reaches 3.500 mm, under the influences of the moist climate of the Black Sea basin. On the coastal plains, the climate is warm and humid, growing cooler as the Caucasian foothills are crossed. There are many water flows, rivers, and runnels throughout the region, many of which run through fully forested flumes.

The main feature of the Circassia is the mountain ranges, which extend from the Northwest to the Southeast. The southern slopes are more precipitous and their terrain is rougher than the northern ones. The highest and most impressive being the middle of Circassia, which includes *Elbrus*<sup>43</sup> (Figure. 03). Elbrus in Circassian language is called *Waschhemaxwe* that means ‘happy mount’ and it is a holy mount for locals and Circassians.

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41. He (15<sup>th</sup> century) was a Genovese traveler, historian and ethnographer. His travelogue “La vita: & sito de Zichi, chiamiti ciarcassi: historia notabile” was among the first sources of the life and customs of the Circassians.

42. Nalchik in Russian: *Нальчик*, is the capital city of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic

43. Mount Elbrus in Russian: *Эльб́ру́с Elbrus*, is the highest mountain in Europe with 5.643m. A dormant volcano, Elbrus is in the Caucasus Mountains in Southern Russia, near the border with Georgia.

The western mountain stretches from the eastern *Anapa* in the extreme northwest of *Circassia* to *Gagra* in Northern Abkhazia. It runs almost in parallel with the shore for about 360 km, generally increasing in height, before it turns inwards in an easterly direction. The narrow coastal strip is mostly rugged terrain. There are three systems associated with the main rivers *Terek*, *Kuma*, and *Kuban*. The former originates in the middle of the Caucasus in the territory of the *Kabardin-Balkar Republic* and ends at the Caspian. It is fed by five main rivers, the *Cherek*<sup>44</sup>, *Chegem*, *Baksan*, *Kurkuzhin*, *Malka*, and a multitude of lesser ones. The *Kuban*, which is one of the largest rivers in the Caucasus, belongs to the *Pontine River* system. Historically it formed the boundary between Eastern and Western Circassia. It also has its sources in the middle of the Caucasus, but it follows a northwesterly direction and its delta is on the Azov Sea (Map. 05).

In summary, geographical landscape of Circassia includes three important items, which were influenced on their identity and history. First, one is the Western Caucasus Mountain and specifically *Elbrus*, which was their refuge and shelter during struggles with others. Therefore, many of the Circassian folklore and mythological stories have taken place around this mount. The second one is rivers that I mentioned above specifically *Terek*, *Kuma* and *Kuban*. Based on archeological excavations the most of ancient civilizations of Circassia and North Caucasus were located around these rivers. The last one in my point of view is coastal plains where they could build their contemporary history and the Sea could survive them. Even their historical capital Sochi is situated in this part.

### 1.2.3 Geographical Distribution

Under domination of imperial Russian and the Soviet Union rule, ethnic and tribal divisions between the most of the peoples were increased, terminating in several different actuarial names being used for various parts of the *Circassian People* who include *Adygheans*, *Cherkessians*, *Kabardians*, *Shapsugians*. Consequently, there is an effort among Circassians to unite under the name Circassian in Russian Censuses to reflect and revive the concept of the Circassian nation.

The majority of their Diaspora already tends to call itself Circassian. The Circassian diaspora refers to the resettlement of the Circassian population, especially during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. From 1763 to 1864, the Circassians fought against the Russian

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44. In Russian: река Чепек *Reka Cherek*, (Length: 76 km) mostly located in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria which is a right tributary of the Baksan River and Terek basin.

Empire in the *Russo-Circassian War*<sup>45</sup>, finally succumbing to a scorched-earth campaign initiated in 1862 under *General Nikolai Yevdokimov*. Subsequently, huge numbers of Circassians were exiled and displaced to the Ottoman Empire and other nearby areas; others were moved and resettled in imperial Russia far from their homeland.

Therefore, when we want to talk about geographical distribution, we have to focus just on the Circassia not on other lands of their Diaspora. Later in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, we will back to diaspora and their distribution, but just as a quick mention, the majority of Circassians live outside of the Russian Federation, where their exact numbers are impossible to determine. The following estimates have been made by the Caucasus Trust (CT) and the Federation of the Caucasus Associations (KAFFED): Turkey: 1,000,000 - 7,000,000; Jordan: 20,000-100,000; Syria: 100,000 (ORSAM, 2012: p.4); Israel: 15,000 (Gammer, 2004: p. 64); and other countries: 500,000 (KAFFED, 2005) (Table. 02).

The division of their distribution into the Russian Federation is as follows: 1. The Kabardin-Balkarian Republic, 2. The Karachai-Cherkess Republic, 3. The Adyghea Republic, 4. The Shapsug Region (Map. 06).

The Kabardin-Balkar is a federated republic where is located in the *Terek River* basin. According to the census of 2010, about 859,939 populations (Census, 2013) include *Kabardians* 57.2%, *Russians* 22.5% and *Balkars* 12.7% as residing in the Republic (Howard, 2012: p. 310). Its capital is Nalchik and the head of the republic is *Yury Kokov*<sup>46</sup>.

The *Karachay-Cherkess* first was established as an autonomous oblast in 1923 and transformed to the republic in 1993 where is located in the upper Terek basin. According to the 2010 Census, *Karachays* make up 41% of the republic's population, followed by *Russians* 32%, *Cherkessians* and *Abazins* together make up 20% (Ibid: pp. 299-308). Cherkessk<sup>47</sup> city is the largest city and the capital of the *Karachay-Cherkess* Republic. This republic has five official languages such as *Cherkess*, *Russian*, *Karachay-Balkar*, *Abaza*, and *Nogai*. Currently, *Rashid Temrezov*<sup>48</sup> is the Head of the republic.

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45. The Russo-Circassian War (1763–1864) refers to a series of battles and wars in Circassia, the northwestern part of the Caucasus, which were part of the Russian Empire's conquest of the Caucasus lasting approximately 101 years, starting under the reign of Tsar Peter the Great and being completed in 1864.

46. In Russian: *Кокков Юрий Александрович*, is a Kabardian politician who is the head of Kabardino-Balkaria since 2013.

47. Cherkessk in Russian: *Черкёссск*, is the capital city of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

48. In Russian: *Рашид Бориспиевич Темрезов*, is a Karchayian politician who is the head of Karachay–Cherkessia since 2011.

The Republic of *Adyghea* is situated inside the *Krasnodar Kray* and lying in the plain and valley of the *Kuban River*, which is populated mostly by Russian ethnicity. Its population of 439,996 included 64.5% *Russians*, 24.2% *Adygheans*, and 3.4% *Armenians* (Ibid: p.346). *Maykop*<sup>49</sup> is its capital city and the current Head of republic is *Murat Kumpilov*<sup>50</sup>.

Currently, all these republics administratively are part of the *North Caucasian Federal District*. The last region is not officially registered nowadays and called the *Shapsug*. The name is one of the twelve tribes of the Circassian people and historically, the *Shapsug* tribe used to make up one of the biggest groups of Circassians and controlled the ports of *Dzhubga*<sup>51</sup> and *Tuapse*<sup>52</sup> to mountain Gorges (Richmond, 2008: p. 22).

On 6 September 1924, the *Bolsheviks* established the *Shapsug National Region*<sup>53</sup> as a part of the Black Sea Region. The center of the whole district was the city of *Tuapse* in the coast of Black Sea. After the end of the Second World War in 1945, the *Shapsug National region* was renamed *Lazarevsky District*. The *Shapsug* called it *Psyŕwap* instead of *Lazarevsky*, because *Lazarevsky* was named for *Mikhail Lazarev*<sup>54</sup> who facilitated the invasion and conquest of Circassia, and put a siege over it during the *Russo-Circassian War*. Nowadays this district is one of four city districts of the *Sochi* in *Krasnodar Krai*. In addition, the most of population is Russians and almost 3,000 *Shapougians* or generally, Circassians live in, but it is still a part of their distribution. Different sources note that before the *Russo-Circassian War* the number of *Shapsug* people was ranging from 150,000 to 300,000 (sochi, 2014). In all four regions, the Circassians form a rural village population, with the cities being predominantly Slavic peoples.

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49. Maykop in Russian: *Майкоп*, is the capital city of the Republic of Adyghea and located on the right bank of the Belaya River.

50. In Russian: *Мурат Каральбиевич Кумпилов*, is an Adyghean politician who is serving as the head of the Republic of Adyghe since 2017.

51. In Russian: *Джубга*, is a seaside resort situated 57 km west of Tuapse in Krasnodar Krai.

52. In Russian: *Tyance*, is a town in Krasnodar Krai, Russia, situated on the northeast shore of the Black Sea, south of Gelendzhik and north of Sochi.

53. The *Shapsug National District* or *Shapsug National Rayon* in Russian: *Шапсугский национальный район* *Šapsugskij nacional'nyj rajon*, was a district that was established in 1924 as a national district for the Circassian Shapsugs tribe of the Black Sea within the Krasnodar Krai.

54. Admiral Mikhail Petrovich Lazarev in Russian: *Михаил Петрович Лазарев*, (1788 - 1851) was a Russian fleet commander and an explorer.

### 1.3 Circassian People

Generally, as it is mentioned above the Circassian people are the Caucasian ethnic groups from the Northwest Caucasus who call themselves as *Adyghean* in the simplest form and the Circassian word is usually used as a synonym for the *Adyghean People* in English (Shami, 1998: pp. 617-646). A slightly wider understanding suggests Circassian refers to the *Adyghean* and their ethnic kin, the linguistically extinct *Ubykh*<sup>55</sup> and the *Abkhaz-Abaza groups*. In its widest version, the Circassian is used to refer to all the North-Caucasian Diasporas including the East Caucasian language speakers *Chechens*, *Ossetians*, or even *Turkic languages* speakers like *Karachay* or *Nogais*<sup>56</sup>, etc (Kaya, 2004: pp. 221-239).

However, I have decided to use the English form of the name of these people. Therefore, the term Circassians denotes all or part of the indigenous peoples of the Caucasus who live in the Northwest Caucasus Range, the formidable chain that divides Caucasia into the *Transcaucasia*<sup>57</sup> to the south and *Ciscaucasia*<sup>58</sup>. There is no certain agreement as to whom exactly of those nations the appellation refers to. It is this last sense that is assumed in this thesis, and the terms *Adyghe* and Circassian will be used interchangeably.

It should be noted that this region is an important stronghold for them and the power struggle to control the region has been an important issue. Therefore, frontiers between varied indigenous tribes and familial groups have remained obscure and endlessly changing. The Circassians, together with the genetically and linguistically related *Abkhazians*, *Abazins* and the nearly extinct community of *Ubykh*, made up the indigenous population of the Northwest Caucasus. However, their languages were not mutually intelligible. The *Adygheans* was by far the largest nation of the Northwest Caucasus before their exile to Ottoman lands, and composed of many tribes: in the eastern part Kabardians and Beslanays; in the western part *Abzakh*, *Shapsug*, *Bzhedugh*, *Nartkhvaj*, *Kemirgoi*, and *Hatuqwey*. The *Shapsug* as I mentioned above also had their ethnic area within the borders of the Krasnodar Region until its abolition in 1945 (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 95).

If I refer to historical texts, I should bring first the *Genovese Giorgio Interiano* definition of Circassians who left us in the 16<sup>th</sup> century just a brief description of the appearance of

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55. In Circassian: пэху, туахы, убых; in Russian: убыхи; used to be one of the twelve Circassian tribes.

56. The Nogais in Russian: *Ногáйцы* or *ногáи*, are a Turkic ethnic group who live in the North Caucasus. They speak the Nogai language and are descendants of various Mongolic and Turkic tribes who formed the Nogai Horde.

57. In Russian: Закавказье *Zakavkaze*, or the South Caucasus.

58. Ciscaucasia is the northern part of the Caucasus region.

Circassians. He notes that the *Zixi* or *Zyghoy* was, par excellence, handsome and well-shaped, their beauty much admired among the *Mamluk Sultanate*<sup>59</sup> (Atalikov, 2010: p. 28). Nearly 300 years later, explanation of the anthropological look of Circassians got more accurate (Cherkasov & others, 2015: p. 75). Hence, for example, in narrating the appearance of a Circassian man, *Frédéric Dubois de Montpéreux*<sup>60</sup> notes: “The Circassian inhabiting the seashore is tall in stature, shapely in body and limbs, and thin in waist; relentless in striving to enhance this type of beauty, even more, he tightens his waist with a leather belt. His gait is graceful and light, his head is oval-shaped; by default, the *Mahometan*<sup>61</sup> shaves his head but keeps a mustache and grows a black non-thick beard; as black are his deep-set eyes; his not long thin nose is quite shapely; the frame of his jaw is elongated and clearly defined. Quite often you can come across Circassians with auburn hair and beards” (De Montpéreux, 2010: pp. 40-41).

### 1.3.1 Tribes

The Circassians generally were divided into tribes and clans especially when they want to identify themselves. They were made up of two groups: Eastern and Western tribes. The *Kabardians*<sup>62</sup> and *Besleneys*<sup>63</sup> composed the Eastern branch; the most important Western *Adyghean* tribes can be listed as such: *Abadzekh*<sup>64</sup>, *Temirgoy*<sup>65</sup>, *Makhosh*<sup>66</sup>, *Khatukhay*<sup>67</sup>, *Natukhay*<sup>68</sup>, *Shapsug*<sup>69</sup>, and *Bzhedugh*<sup>70</sup> (Table. 05).

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59. *Mamluk Sultanate* was a medieval realm spanning Egypt, the Levant, and Hejaz. It lasted from the overthrow of the Ayyubid dynasty until the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517. The Mamlūk state reached its height under Turkic rule with Arabic culture and then fell into a prolonged phase of decline under the Circassians.

60. He (1798 - 1850) was a Swiss travel writer, naturalist, archaeologist and historian. He is known for his travelogue toward the Caucasus.

61. Mohammedan (also spelled *Muhammadan*, *Mahommedan*, *Mahomedan* or *Mahometan*) is a term for a follower of the prophet of Islam “Muhammad”.

62. In Russian: *Кабардинцы Kabardintsi*

63. In Russian: *Бесленевцы Beslenevtsi*

64. In Russian: *Абадзехи Abazekhi*

65. In Russian: *Темиргоевцы Temirgoevtsi*

66. In Russian: *Махосевцы Makhoshevtsi*

67. In Russian: *Хатукайцы Khatukaitsi*

68. In Russian: *Натухайцы Natukhaitsi*

69. In Russian: *Шансуги Shapsugi*

70. In Russian: *Бжедуги Bezhedugi*



However, among them, just a few tribes have maintained a substantive presence in the Caucasus: *Kabardian*, *Beslanay*, *Temirgoi*, *Bzhedugh*, and *Shapsug*. The rest were exterminated, assimilated by other Circassian tribes or they already left to the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Hewitt, 1999: p. 27).

It should be considered that Circassian tribes were divided into principalities, within which the rights and duties of individuals were ordained by a code of behavior called *Adige Xabze* or in English ‘*Circassian Etiquette*’. In this term, each person of Circassian society addresses based on his/her clan and tribe. Actually, this system of morals had evolved to ensure that strict martial discipline was maintained to defend the homeland against the invaders. Historically, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, some Circassian tribes transformed to a more equitable system by overthrowing the ruling classes. However, these formed small clans and lived in secluded mountainous areas (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 26).

### 1.3.2 Identity

As I mentioned above Circassian society had been tribal in structure, therefore the main identity of Circassian comes from their tribal background. While we want to talk about ‘identity’, we should define in advance. Actually, in the political science ‘identity’ plays a central role in work on nationalism and ethnic mentality (Horowitz, 1985; Deng, 1995). On the other hand, the idea of ‘*state identity*’ is at the center of constructivist critiques of realism and analyses of state sovereignty in the international relations (Katzenstein, 1996; Biersteker & Weber, 1996), but generally ‘identity’ matter marks many arguments on gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, language and culture (Young, 1990; Miller, 1995; Taylor, 1989) which I try to use this definition of ‘identity’ on this thesis with focusing on linguistic and cultural matters. Even though here is the most relevant entry for ‘identity’ in the Oxford English Dictionary: “The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality”<sup>71</sup>. Note that this does not easily capture what we seem to mean when we refer to ‘national identity’ or ‘ethnic identity’, for example.

Regarding the ethnic and national identity, I should mention that it is a difficult concept to define. There are a lot of overlapping layers of self-conception, but there are by no means confined to, native language, religious faith, culture, history, and traditional homeland. In the post-Soviet era, discussions of ethnic and national identity have often brought out many

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71. 2nd edition, 1989

political debates in the new emerging countries and nations. Afterward, identity in its willing incarnation has a twofold sensation. It refers at the same time to public categories and to the fount of an individual's self-esteem or serenity (Fearon, 1999: p.2).

Since the Caucasus invasion by Russian Tsar until the collapse of Soviet Union, due to the physical divisions of Circassia, I can say that the stabilization of national identity has never been practical. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there have been no serious attempts at encouraging national and ethnic unity in the region by Circassian elites. However, this idea has never been implemented, due to various factors, including political pressures, geographical dispersion, and internal non-convergence.

Nevertheless, in my point of view, Circassian identity has found the unit meaning through their history that characterized by traditional and local economy, class system & social structure, customs & traditions, music & dance, religion & belief, language & literature and even their cuisine & traditional costumes which will be mentioned. Another item in the formation of Circassian identity is immigration and imagination, which are historical, linked processes that produce memorable moments in the pasts of peoples, nations, communities, and individuals. Therefore, in this case, Circassian diaspora has had long-term influences on their community, which is still observable among them. Diaspora identities are constructed in motion and along different lines than nation-states. Within a few decades, Circassian diaspora found themselves not Ottoman people but citizens of the new emerged states of Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel and etc. The peak point in the historical processes of identity formation was the breakup of the Soviet Union and the free access to territories of the homeland, many of whom have now traveled to the Caucasus, some intending to settle permanently and it means that the identity still is shaping (Shami, 2000: pp. 178-181). In addition, the symbols that Circassians hold central to their sense of collective identity are derived from these historical experiences (Shami, 2009: p. 156).

Additionally, there was a discourse between officials in Russia and Diaspora regarding Circassian identity specifically before *Sochi Olympics*<sup>72</sup>. It is clear, though, that a patriotic sense of Circassian identity is emerging even despite a long history of exile, assimilation, linguistic and cultural change in different geographical distribution.

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72. The 2014 Winter Olympics officially called the XXII Olympic Winter Games.

### **1.3.2.1 Traditional & Local Economy**

The traditional economy is one of the most important parts of the Circassian identity, which was varied. The main traditional economy comes from breeding horses, cows, oxen, sheep, pigs, and chickens, and growing abundant fruits and vegetables. Apiculture in villages and the gathering of walnuts were also vital parts of their agricultural economy, as was hunting (Hotko, 2005: p. 416). The carpet weaving was a prime manufactured good that usually was based on women's housework. The Agriculture, craft industries, husbandry, and local manufacture were some of the activities of this class engaged in. Slaves could be released and freed in exchange for specific services. Peasants made up the infantry of a prince's army but were not allowed to don coats of arms (Wanderer, 1883: p. 05).

Despite the upheavals that have been rocking the Northern Caucasus since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Northwest Caucasus has escaped the worst and remains relatively peaceful and quiet. This is not to say that there are no tensions in the area. However, these are unlikely to result in serious armed conflicts and compromise the modest economic gains that have painstakingly been achieved in the past few years. Nevertheless, stereotypes are generally difficult to undo, and foreign investors are loath to inject their money into an area they perceive to be unstable. The transition to market economy has been fraught with difficulties and hardships. After more than seventy years of suppression of individuality and initiative, people found it difficult to adapt to new and unfamiliar conditions. In an effort to stimulate the economy and introduce the initiative, privatization was carried out on a large scale in the mid-1990s. However, it was those already in privileged positions who took advantage of the new opportunities and many became very rich, flaunting their newfound wealth. Ordinary people, on the other hand, saw their standards of living taking a nose-dive. Unemployment soared and so did the concomitant crime and other ills resulting from social and economic imbalances and iniquities (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 123-128). Therefore, I can categorize their traditional economic on four groups, first of all, agriculture-apiculture, second transporting goods, third handy crafts and local arts, fourth trade on horse breeding, cattle trading and fishing.

### **1.3.2.2 Social Structure**

The class system & social structure of Circassian society is the most important part of individual identity which each Circassian uses it for identifying themselves. This structure is complicated and is based on hierarchical feudalism. As it is mentioned above in feudal

societies, laws preserved in the *ubiquitous*<sup>73</sup>, which was differentiated according to class, regulated the rights and duties of each caste and defined class inter-relations. Quarrels and controversies were looked into by ad hoc councils whose jurisdiction ended after resolving the cases at hand. The feudal system almost ended in 1864 when Russia invaded and totally conquered Circassian lands. However, the institution was taken by the Circassians to the diaspora, where it survived for a few decades after in Ottoman territories. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a series of upheavals rocked some parts of Western Circassia (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 156-158). According to *Paul B. Henze* in the book of ‘Circassian Resistance to Russia’: “After the Georgians and the Armenians, the Circassians came closest of all the Caucasian peoples to developing the prerequisites for nationhood. They had traditions of roots extending back to the dawn of recorded history” (Abtorkhanov, 1992: p. 67). Additionally, in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, according to the confirmation of the *Genovese G. Interiano*, the mountaineer groups were divided into nobles or aristocratic families, peasant and vassals, military serfs, and slaves. They did not tolerate their subordinates having horses like theirs. If someone outside the noble circle started to raise a foal, the nobles would take it away and give him or her a different animal in return, like a horned livestock animal. They would normally say to the person, “This is what’s for you, not a horse” (Atalikov, 2010: p. 26).

Alongside of these historical notes, the Kabardians had the most intricate class structure among the Circassian tribes. At the top of the class, the structure is located Prince or *Pschi* then as his two hands *Tume* and *Mirze*. Under these two, there is *Werq*, which means the Nobility class. According to *Shora Nogmov*, the nobility was divided into five sub-classes, the commoners into four (Table. 06).

*Amjad Jaimoukha* has defined this structure accurately. He describes that each tribe was divided into princedoms, which were effectively independent, although there was a council of princes, which met at times of national crises. He says that “at the apex of each principality stood the prince who wielded almost absolute power over his subjects, who were considered as his property. The title of prince was hereditary, never acquired or bestowed. Although absolute power usually led to complete corruption, it was in the prince's interest to gain his vassals' unquestioned loyalty, which virtue was of the greatest essence in feudal society. Next to the principal caste came the nobles, who were divided into the proper and lesser

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73. Xabze

nobility, and the vassals who were given a free hand in their fiefdoms in return for their allegiance” (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 157-160).

As it is much clearer now, this system was too complex, but the main point was its structure such as a pyramid that was based on the clans and tribes. In this structure, the age and richness of each person in society as well as was important. The Russian conquest and clump dismissal irrevocably undid the class system. Most of the higher classes who had moved to the Ottoman Empire before the end of the Russo-Circassian war, and they had sought to have their formerly subjects follow them to restore the class system in the new diasporic community.

### **1.3.2.3 Customs & Traditions**

Traditional customs and social norms were enshrined in the orally transmitted rigid and complex rules named ‘*Adige Xabze*’<sup>74</sup> or ‘Circassian Etiquette’, which earlier was mentioned. The basic principle of Circassian customs and traditions should be sought through the *Xabze* that served as the law for ad hoc courts and councils set up to resolve contentious cases, other council issues and announce irrevocable judgments. Actually, *Adige Xabze* is complex rules for everyday life of a Circassian person that mostly are the unwritten traditional code of conduct that governed the Circassian communities across Circassia for centuries. It is included of Birth rules, Christening, Upbringing and Growing, Courtship and Marriage, Divorce and Bigamy, Disease and Treatment, Death and Obsequies, Greetings and Salutes, Generosity and Chivalry, Politeness and Respect, Blood-revenge, Hospitality, and Feasts.

Traditionally, the origins of the Etiquette are made reference to the golden era of the *Narts*, when its nucleus rules were provided. The characteristic of the *Narts*, as demonstrated in the oral tradition, were paragons that the Circassians through the ages had worked obstinately to imitate. It includes an obvious system of norms; behavioral rules and laws, which has been passed down from generation to generation, determines personal and community behavioral rules and is binding on all members of the community. The collective and individual attributes of these legendary heroes have shaped the code of behavior of Circassian society since time immemorial and molded the knightly characters of its nobility. These qualities included love of the homeland or fatherland and its defense to the last, idolization of honor, bravery and concomitant abhorrence of cowardice, observance of the

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74. In Russian: АԥԼԻԴՅ ԽԱԲՅՅ *Adige Xabze*

code of chivalry, loathing for oppression, loyalty to clan and kin, fealty to bonds of camaraderie, care of and fidelity to one's horse (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 172).

In Circassian traditions could be found some rules which called *Adet*<sup>75</sup>. This collection of behavior signifies customary law as it prevailed. Its main tenets were hospitality, respect for elders, friendship behavior, blood-revenge, and chivalry. (Richmond, 2011: p. 214) It is sometimes used for, and confused with *Xabze*. In general, *Adet* referred to the law that regulated relations between the different peoples of the North Caucasus and it is a bit related to religious ethics, whereas *Xabze* was a specifically Circassian affair (Jaimoukha, 2009: pp. 4-8).

Therefore, I can summarize that from the cradle to the grave, the Circassian native creed<sup>76</sup>, intertwined with the code of conduct, *Adige Xabze*, dictated the way an individual behaved in the society, formed his/her values and identity. The customs and traditions were the dual formers of the Circassian outlook on life and they meshed. Denying one of these nearly related components would have implicated releasing the other. Afterward, the mountaineers exhibited much permanence in the way of preserving their traditions. The conservatism of traditions was a distinctive trait of the Circassian life (Cherkasov & others, 2015: p. 83).

#### 1.3.2.4 Music & Dance

The music and traditional dance of a nation or an ethnic is a reflection of its mores and psyche. This cultural phenomenon, which reflects the morale of the people of a land, is the best way to identify and verify the ethnic-national identity. It is an illustration of its love for life graceful harmonic music fervors the feelings of man all over, and the Circassians, despite the imperfection of their local music, were charmed and cheered by it. Music was essential at celebrations as the accompaniment to dances and recitations of traditional poetries, and it revived up their dialogues.

The Circassian music has always been rich in dance tunes and melodies and reminds us of the form of all Caucasian Dance, which is in general produced by an orchestra, as opposed to a single musician. The melodies for the songs and dances from the solo accordion players are a relatively recent orientation. Generally, dance music was played in 2/2 or 6/8 time with a background chorus (Adighe, 1956: p. 101).

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75. In Russian: адэт *adet*, in Arabic: عادت *adat* is Arabic word that means custom or habit mostly back to Islamic ethic.

76. In Circassian: фIэшхъуныгъэ *Fieshkhunige*

Jaimoukha in his valuable work about the Circassian music says that “musical lore had been preserved by minstrels until the 1930s, by which time much of the music and songs had been collected and preserved. Some songs commemorate events that go back to the fourth century AD. Collection of music and songs started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, systematic work only began in the Soviet period when many song collections were published. Books on the history of Circassian music were also issued, toeing the line of Communist historiography. Nevertheless, they remain seminal works indispensable in the study of Adygea [Adyghean] music” (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 224).

In the Soviet era, this intricate history was molten into a more or less logical set of tales that maintained the specialty of each subgroup language families and identified collective dance as the most proper sense in which Pan-Caucasus commonalities should be valorized and demonstrated (Zhemukhov & King, 2013: p. 291).

Classical songs were generally executed in a singing sound, but without missing the beauty of a single syllable. It was nearly inconceivable to sing them without those sounds, which had given the songs harmonic forms and fetched rhyme into convenient melody. The Circassian music is characterized by certain instruments, including *Pshine*<sup>77</sup>, *Pkhach'ach*<sup>78</sup>, *Bereban*<sup>79</sup>, *Pkhetaw*<sup>80</sup>, *Apa-pshine*<sup>81</sup>, *Qamlepsh*<sup>82</sup>, and *Shik'epshine*<sup>83</sup> (Figure. 04).

Dance has a special position in the Circassian culture and their routine life. In mythical times, the *Narts* held annual festivals in which dances were held. None of public or family gathering and festivity get complete without a round or more of dancing with singing. It kept the men dancers in utmost shape thanks to the energetic melody. Dance is originally a spiritual ritual, a kind of lively prayer in the Circassian culture. Afterward, it turned into a figure of lyrical celebration, remaining some of its ceremonial importance. All kind of dances in the region is based on the wealthy material of Circassian folklore (Figure. 05).

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77. An accordion which is played in a specific way to produce Circassian tunes

78. 2 sets of "wood blocks", each set containing about six pieces of wood held by hand; when a player strikes them together they produce a pure sound of wood to indicate the beat rhythm of the song.

79. A drum known as Dhol; in Adyghe it is called Shontrip. Struck by hand or two short batons. Drummers' hands bleed when they train, or overplay.

80. 'Wood-strike' made from wood looks like a small table and it is used for hitting it with sticks for tempo.

81. A three string lute

82. Circassian flute

83. A Circassian stringed instrument

Generally, women's movements were graceful and reserved, no wild movements being required or displayed. The new descendant of female *sedate* dancers sometimes seizes the chance of informal séance to show off intense moves, in the parody of their male partners. In one modern comic choreography, gender-bending females perform acrobatic feats, strictly masculine affairs, with a flourish (Jaimoukha, 2010: p. 01).

As a result, the environment in which music is performed, the manner in which folk songs are performed, and the audience constitute the memory codes of cultural transmission. Music is the product of the common sentiments, ideas, philosophy, the way of social perception and interpretation of the society in which it is generated, and it is in this respect one of most powerful and functional channels of social communication. Hence, music and dance both generates a social identity of its own society and carries the characteristics of belonging to that particular geography and society in which it is produced.

### 1.3.3 Beliefs

As it is mentioned earlier, the religion of ethnicity must be important determinants of identity formation, therefore, the link between religion and identity will be reviewed among Circassians in Circassia and Diaspora. Actually, religion is more likely to play a significant role in identity formation in a culture where ethnicity or a nation confront a continually fluctuating social and political milieu. Essentially, the transcendent meaning derived from religious affiliation is important for identity development and well-being. In the absence of the viewpoint available through religious beliefs, the worldview it provides, and its role in shaping and guiding behavior, the multiplicity of choices and options accessible to the modern community is more likely to breed despair, hopelessness, and confusion (Oppong, 2013: pp. 10-16). The religion can provide definitive answers and viewpoints about slippery issues of life that might be more fascinating and relevant for a generation and a nation who are trying to shape their identity, as well as the religion was a crucial component in the life of the mountaineering community (Erikson, 1964: p. 24).

The Circassian religious beliefs had been centered around a spine of *polytheism*, *animism*, and *paganism* with some *Christianity* and *Islamic* influences until the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It may be that the nature and the set ways of the Circassians played a significant part in impressing the indigence beliefs and sidelining spiritual imports. The *Monotheistic* faiths have had little suffering on the Circassian way of life in this environment and this explains the selector nature of the Circassian system of beliefs emphasized by outsiders. At the end of the Middle Ages, the Circassians were kept in the middle of a power struggle



between Russian *Orthodox Christianity*, Ottoman *Sunni Islam*, and even Persian *Shi'a Islam*. They reverse their religious loyalty and allegiance very undoubtedly, converting from *Islam* into *Christianity* and vice versa, as the position demanded and for convenience (Minahan, 2000: p. 354). *Shi'a Islam* has never been into the Circassian religious identity; however, the Circassian slaves in Persia were converted to *Shi'ism* in the 16-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It should be noted that considering the '*Adige Xabze*' as the traditional religion of the Circassians is a common mistake made even by the Circassians. Whereas ancient religion regulated the spiritual and ritual domains, but the *Xabze* regulated the daily aspects of a Circassian's life. The substantive source of information on the Circassian beliefs and ritual ceremonies is the *Nart Epos* or *Nart Sagas*<sup>84</sup> (Jaimoukha, 2009: pp. 5-8) which will be explained further.

### 1.3.3.1 Pre-Islamic Beliefs

As regards, in other antique faiths, the genesis of the indigenous Circassian mechanism of beliefs is wrapped in suspicion and interlaced with myth and legend. The Circassians did not generate an indigence holy book, by the time they achieved the literacy in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and then most of them had converted into Islam. Nevertheless, the heritage of those far away days has been protected in mythology, giving us sight into the world of the prehistoric ancestors of the Circassians. In addition, the accounts of indigenous writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and foreign visitors entirely the ages provide snippets of pre-Islamic spiritual practices and ceremonies (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 137-138).

Some researcher such as *Amjad Jaimoukha* believes that there was some likeness between old Circassian priests and Celtic Druids<sup>85</sup>. Both castes glorified trees had sacred groves and practiced some form of human immolation and sacrifice. In addition, the Circassian *Elders* and *Druids* were the arbitrators and judges in their respective societies (Jaimoukha, 2009: p. 06).

The *Animism*<sup>86</sup> is probably the oldest belief of the Circassians, and it was prevalent among all peoples of the North Caucasus. Its origin probably dates back to the Paleolithic Age, or

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84. In Circassian: Нартхымэ акъыбарыхэ *nartkhime akibarikhe* that are a series of tales originating from north Caucasus and form the basic mythology of the tribes and ethnics.

85. A druid was a member of the high-ranking professional class in ancient Celtic cultures.

86. Animism is the religious belief that objects, places and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. The basic tenet of animism was the belief that a soul resided in every object, animate or inanimate, functioning as the motive force and guardian. In animistic thought, nature was all alive. In a future state, the spirit would exist

the Old Stone Age, more than 10,000 years ago. The Circassians, similar the most North Caucasian peoples, used to praise the trees and considered them as totems, believing that they accommodated hidden divinity. Many ritual services were developed connected with specific plants such as trees and holy groves were visited by prayers in processions. Animals also were sacrificed at the bottom of trees and feasts held in the ceremony.

The route moved from *Animism* and the accompanying *Totemism*<sup>87</sup> into *Paganism*, the belief in the possession of some objects of supernatural powers nature, and a preliminary conception of deities and patrons. Perhaps paganism set up in the *Neolithic Age*, more than seven millennia ago. As a rule of thumb, every natural phenomenon had its own god. The collective of deities, gods, and patrons, who were part of the environment and supervised all its figures in a plural manner, formed a *Pantheon* with a leading god (Ibid: pp. 138-141). Therefore, like other Caucasian people, ancient beliefs had been influences on the Circassian identity, rather than adhering to official religions. Originally based on geography and environment, which has always been a place of transition, this religious identity has been formed.

About pre-Islamic beliefs, I should mention *Giorgio Interiano*'s text, which had this to say commenting on the religiousness of Circassians in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: "They call themselves Christians and have Greek clergymen among them, but they baptize their children after the age of 8. That said the clergymen just sprinkle them with holy water, in accordance with their custom, and utter a brief blessing" (Interiano, 1974: p. 47). The Christianity came to Western Circassia from Byzantium during the reign of Emperor Justinian<sup>88</sup> in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Many clergyman and priests were sent to Circassia and Caucasus and then churches were built on some highland locations, from which the native population was proselytized. The *Georgian Bagrationi dynasty*<sup>89</sup> subdued the Eastern

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as part of an immaterial soul. The spirit, therefore, was thought to be universal. Ghosts, demons, and deities inhabited almost all objects, rendering them subject to worship.

87. Totemism, defined as the intimate relation supposed to exist between an individual or a group of individuals and a class of natural objects, i. e. the totem, is at the root of primitive religion and is intimately related with animism.

88. Justinian I in Latin: *Flavius Petrus Sabbatius Iustinianus Augustus* (482 - 565), known as Justinian the Great and also Saint Justinian the Great in the Eastern Orthodox Church, who was the Eastern Roman emperor from 527 to 565.

89. In Georgian: ბაგრატიონი *bagrat'ioni* is a royal family that reigned in Georgia from the middle Ages until the early 19th century.

Circassians and probably converted them to Greek Orthodox Christianity in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Many Churches were built, which were destroyed at the end of Georgian rule in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, some sources clarify that in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries the Russian imperial princes of *Tmutarakan*<sup>90</sup> and the kings of Georgia executed the religious conversion in the course of Circassia. From the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Catholicism* made some incursions in the Western parts of Circassia due to the influence of the *Genoese*, who created trading posts on the littoral of the Black Sea and even some churches were constructed in the region (Jaimoukha, 2009: pp. 5-8).

### 1.3.3.2 Islam

Islam is located in the center of Circassian religious identity nowadays. The Circassians are nominally Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School, except for a small Orthodox Christian Kabardian community who are living in the city of *Mozdok*<sup>91</sup> in the North Ossetia. Islam almost began to make progress in Circassia around the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the beginning, Islam had tiny influences on the folklore and writing traditions, but the only significant impact of the Muslim faith was the introduction of a new literary genre and sort, in the name of *Mevlid*<sup>92</sup>, connected with the birth celebration of *Prophet Mohammad* (R. Smeets, 1980).

Generally, there were two types of *Muslimness* permeation of the Northern Caucasus. In the east, the first contact with Islam is accomplished in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when the Arabs conquered Dagestan. Progressively, Islam outspread to another part of North Caucasus. Thus by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, most lands of Northeast Caucasus had been converted to Islam by force or voluntarily. Therefore, Kabardians was the first among the Circassian people to be treated with the Islamic influences from the East. In 1570, *Giray*<sup>93</sup>, the Khan of the Tatars, defeated a composed force of Beslanays and Kabardians and forced some princes to become Muslim. Historically, the Ottomans, after conquering *Trebizond* in 1461, extended their domination

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90. Tmutarakan or Tmutorakan was the name of a Mediaeval Kievan Rus' principality and trading town that controlled the Cimmerian Bosphorus, the passage from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov.

91. In Russian: Моздок *Mozdak* is a town and the administrative center of Mozdoksky District of the Republic of North Ossetia–Alania, Russia, located on the left shore of the Terek River.

92. In Arabic: المولد *mawlid*

93. Girays, were the Genghisid/Turkic dynasty that reigned in the Khanate of Crimea from its formation in 1427 until its downfall in 1783.

over the entire coast and inland into Circassia. In these areas, the local aristocracy adopted Sunni Islam but the mass of the population was only lightly converted (Henze, 1995: p. 04).

The religious contest between Orthodox and Islam Sunni in Circassia caused an encounter between the two faiths. However, it was never serious religious quarrel, and it made only contacts with the Ottomans and the Russians in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by sending missionaries (Tarran, 1991: pp. 103-117). Nevertheless, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the most Circassians had become Muslims. We should not forget that due to the Caucasian war, which had to do with the activity of the so-called *Sheikh Mansour*<sup>94</sup>. Following overmuch armed clashes and the defeat of the Circassian originality, a new system of religious rules was established in Circassia, which now included four books: *The Bible*, *The Psalms of David*, *The evangelist's book*, and *The Quran* (Bell, 2007: p. 192).

After the exile, the destinies of the immigrants and those who remained took different routes. The recent group was disconnected from further Muslim influences and the ancient system of faiths importuned. Only a minority performed Islamic mores and rituals. Northwest Caucasians are not known for their religious fervor, nor do they display fundamentalist tendencies. Islam in the Circassian Republics has thus far not been radicalized such as Eastern Caucasus. Most religious instructors who were sent to the North Caucasus from the Middle East starting from the early 1990s realized that the Eastern North Caucasus a more fertile soil for their ritual teachings. In this regard, it is indispensable to emphasize the discrepancy between the religious faiths and practices of the Northeast and Northwest Caucasians. Islam formed as a fundamental part of the social and spiritual life in the east. There has developed a combination of Islam and the old beliefs culminating in Sufism and the *Tarikat*<sup>95</sup>. These sights have never met ground among the Circassians in the west who saw the new faith as a threat to their traditions and norms (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 155).

The Circassian Diaspora tend to be more religious than those in the Caucasus are, although the survival and strength of ancient beliefs among the latter definitely deserve investigation. This reality has been generating some attrition and friction between the two sides. Most diaspora visitors scowled upon some of the old customs and traditions of

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94. Al-Imam al-Mansur al-Mutawakil 'ala Allah known as Sheikh al-Mansur (1760–1794) was a Chechen Islamic religious and Military leader who led the resistance against Catherine the Great during the late 18th century.

95. In Arabic: طريقت *Tariqat*

Circassians that violated Islamic law '*Sharia*'. The terminating in tension is a consequence of the congested differences between these two groups. As Jaimoukha believes that the status will be under control for the near future owing to the small number of returnees to their homeland. However, if the number is ever to rise considerably, and afterward tension might expand into hatred, not to say as a conflict, which would defeat the whole purpose of the exercise (Jaimoukha, 2009: pp. 75-83). Nevertheless, a possible consideration for this contention, in addition to the applications of the community, might have been to attenuate the religious component which had supplied a connection to the Islam, and to accent the unique cultural-national component or perhaps an understanding and a recognition with the propensity to use the *United Language* as a tool to renew and to fasten ethnolinguistic identity.

#### **1.3.4 Language & Literature**

Language and literature are the means by which the cultural identity of a group people is comprehended and described. It is the storage of the spirit among a nation, an ethnic or a group of people and plays important role in the ethnolinguistic course.

The Circassian language as it is mentioned earlier is one of the three divisions of the Northwest Caucasian languages which usually calls *Adyghean*. Although genetically related with two others of *Abkhaz-Abaza* and extinct language of *Ubykh*, the three languages are reciprocally complex and unintelligible, the literal differences between them being quite fundamental. However, because of geographical gaps, the route language differentiated into three distinct existences: *proto-Abkhaz*, *proto-Circassian* and *proto-Ubykh* (Table. 07).

The Circassian literary language officially was promoted and formed after the October revolution of 1917. At the first in 1918, it developed based on Arabic script. The Latin script was adopted in 1927, and Cyrillic has been used since 1938 (Kuipers, 1960: pp. 07-10). The Circassian language itself is set up of Eastern and Western groups. The east of Circassia is combined of two main dialects, *Beslanay* and *Kabardian*. But, these dialects are too near that some linguists consider the latter a disparate sub-dialect of the former. In the west shows more marked dialect-divisions than Kabardian, which is overall relatively homogeneous. These are differences and names all because of a reflection to the tribal and social structures between Eastern and Western Circassians (Map. 07).

Each branch of Circassian is demonstrated by one literary and official language: Kabardian in *Kabardin-Balkar* and the *Karachay-Cherkess Republics*, and *Adyghean* in the

*Adyghea Republic*. Literary Kabardian is based on the dialect of *Greater Kabardia*<sup>96</sup>. Literary *Adyghea* is an advanced form of *Temirgoi*, with a substantive input of words and forms from *Bzhedugh* and *Shapsug*. In fact, according to Jaimoukha's opinion, the modern West Circassian is based on the dialects of remained tribes after the exile which has escaped the worst (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 245-249).

In the case of literature, according to the German scholar, *F. Bodenstedt*, who visited the North Caucasus at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mentioned that for the Circassian, the poetry is a reservoir of national wisdom, a guide to decent action, and the definitive arbiter (Jaimoukha, 2001). On the other hand, *Paul B. Henze* wrote, "Circassians had a rich tradition of oral poetry. Oratory was a highly developed art. Leaders gained as much renowned for their speechmaking ability as for their skill in battle" (Henze, 1992: p. 71). Additionally, *W. E. Curtis*, who traveled to the North Caucasus in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, asserted that Circassia did not have literature, but "their poets have written many charming lines and there are two or three local histories of merit" (Curtis, 1911: p. 255). His report was protecting, to say the least, and ejected writing traditions that drawback for hundreds of years.

In fact, Circassian literature was written well before the Russian invasion of Northwest Caucasus and certainly had attained a high level of development long before the Russians made their presence felt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It had been preserved in national memory thanks to the roving musicians. Linguistically, some tales go back almost 1,500 years, to the time of early Christianity in the Northwest Caucasus. Some efforts to collect these tales first was in 1860 by *V. Kusikov* who published '*On the Poetry of the Circassians*' in Stavropol. Later in 1924, a collection of *Adyghean* literary material was published in Moscow. Additionally, work on the history of Kabardian literature had already been published by *Chamozokov*<sup>97</sup> by 1929. Generally, oral tradition consists of thousands of tales and stories that take up almost every theme in the life of ancient Circassians. When literature was formalized in the Soviet Union era, writers had a very rich tradition to fall back upon, and many mature works were produced early on. In fact, they can be considered as a continuance of the old structure. In spite of the limitations imposed by ideology and the narrow scope of permissible themes, classic works were penned that have kept their value to this day (Jaimoukha, 1998, p. 02).

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96. Or Kabarda which refers to Easter Circassia as a historical land.

97. See more details: *Chamozokov*, '*Istoriya kabardinskoi pismennosti [History of Kabardian Writers]*', in *Zapiski SeveroKavkazskogo Kraevogo gorskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta, Rostov-on-Don, vol. 2, 1929*.

#### 1.4 Ethno-Political Issues

If we want to talk about ethnopolitical issues as the most part of Human Geography in Circassia or better to say in the Northwest Caucasus, at first we should refer to the end of Soviet Union or even further till the announcement of the ‘Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Russian Federation’<sup>98</sup> which was an intensive search for ways to reform the nation-state mechanism of the Russian Federation hegemony. Additionally, I should draw the attention that between 1990 and 1996, the formation of politicized national movements with the ideas about reforming the national-state system in the Northwest Caucasus was completed. Projects for the division, or federalization, of the republics of *Kabardin-Balkar* and *Karachay-Cherkess* in accordance with ethnic principles were put forward. It means authorities had already decided not to have two homogeneous ethnic republics, for example, *Kabardin-Cherkess* and *Karachay-Balkar*.

*Roman Szporluk* believes that one of the characteristic aspects of the Soviet theory and practice in the field of the nationality-citizenship question was that “it virtually created nations and nationalities following criteria and purposes that were its own, and in conformity with these it charted out ‘national’ or ‘republic’ borders. The Soviets thus created a host of ethnic problems that they proved to be incapable of dealing with in the final years of the USSR and left as their legacy to their successors. One of the fundamental aspects of the entire Soviet experience with ethnicity was to connect nationality and the right of nationalities to the territory. The Soviets did not invent the concept of ethnic homeland, but they did much to make it even more central to the idea of nationality than it had been earlier... All those ethnic homelands enjoyed under the Soviets the status of political entities, and even the smallest, and thus ranking lowest in the hierarchy of autonomous regions and republics, formally enjoyed at least rudiments of ‘statehood’” (Szporluk, 1994: p. 05).

Therefore, diversity in religion, ethnicity, historical experience, and political allegiances and aspirations complicate efforts to alleviate local tensions and integrate it more with the rest of the country. Understanding this pluralism is essential for designing and implementing

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98. The Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Russian SFSR (Russian: Декларация о государственном суверенитете РСФСР, tr. Deklaratsiya o gosudarstvennom suverenitete RSFSR) was a political act of the Russian SFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic), then part of the Soviet Union, which marked the beginning of constitutional reform in Russia. (12 June 1990)

policies and laws that advance conflict resolution rather than make differences more irreconcilable (International Crisis Group, 2012).

In *Kabardin-Balkar*, the *Balkar national movement* demanded the formation of a Federal Republic of *Kabardia* and *Balkaria* in which the minority *Balkars* would enjoy both full equality and virtually complete autonomy. Later, the Kabardian and the *Balkarian movements* went even further and agreed to the dissolution of the *Kabardin-Balkar Republic*, an agreement that was supported by the Supreme Soviet of the *Kabardin-Balkar Republic*. All of this created an enormously unstable ethnolinguistic situation (Azrael and others, 1998: pp. 45-48) (Table. 08).

*Popov* an ethnic researcher in Russia thinks those issues come from identity-based interaction which implies ambiguous, contradictory and diametrically opposite effects on the same political, cultural and historical contexts. On the one hand, the identity-based interactions contribute to the development of civic consciousness, increasing the social importance of an individual and the level of political rights and freedoms. The necessity of promoting the ethnopolitical integration in the Northwest Caucasus is due to instrumental causes: from the ethnic viewpoint which the main one is ethnolinguistic, the creation of an integrated 'society for everyone' is natural societal purpose; the constructional reasons of supporting the integration are connected with social, economic, ethnic contradistinctions that diminish the mobility, which in its turn leads to social atomization and produces a negative effect on the modernization process and prevention of ethnic conflicts in their most destructive form of identity-based conflicts (Popov, 2017: pp. 76-77).

Another important point is this case is religion, basically Islam. It is quite possible that demographical growth will continue especially in Muslims case what will lead to greater pressure on limited economical sources and more intensive interethnic competition in Circassia. This matter is important to attend to growing Islam influence among young Circassian generations. The religion can become both an ethnic identity base and an efficient move of Circassian mobilization against external policy from Moscow.

The latest ethnopolitical issues, in the case of Sochi Olympic, several Circassian diaspora activists were disenchanted with the meager results of the campaigns against the sports events hosted in Sochi. The failure to fully accomplish the ethnopolitical agenda post-Sochi Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games and post-May 21 do not have to mean the end game for Circassian activists across the diaspora and/or living in the homeland. Generally, it was characterized as disrespect of Circassian ancestors. Emotional perception of history carried a unifying function; it contributed to ethnic mobilization and politicization (Petersson &



Vamling, 2013: pp. 95-123), though the emotional background was successfully combined with pragmatism. The Sochi Olympics also were supposed to bring to Circassians, much more globally and universal (Muller, 2013: pp. 5-14). Therefore, it can be concluded that, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ethnic-political issues in the region has been pursued in a sensitive manner. Even though the partition of cultural and linguistic groups into definite and reciprocally limited ethnic categories is an optional process, this can be gained by examining undeniable specification systematically in all cases. In this case, the Circassian Diaspora acted the opportunities provided by the upcoming an international event as the very chance for the manifestation of their right for the territory of Circassia to the international community (Tsibenko, 2015: p. 83). In addition, the polar attitude of ethno-political issues manifested itself toward the Circassian Question and requiring immediate solution by means of the research activity, in Russia, on the contrary, its very existence was placed in question. In general speaking, I think the ethnolinguistic phenomena are base and route of all ethno-political issues in the whole region of Caucasus.



## 2 Chapter - Historical Background

### 2.1 Introduction

The Circassians have had the complicated background and few historical written sources make difficult explore in their history for historians. Since the beginning of their history, they lived on their lands in a tribal or clan structure and organized their societies according to their traditions and customs as mentioned in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I will survey their historical background until Circassians exile by the Imperial Russian Army, and when they became a part of the Ottoman population. Although their highland homeland is well-known for its uneven, isolating topography, the Circassians have long been well consolidated with the international arena. Circassia faces a large expansion of the Black Sea, a region that has attracted regional merchants and neighboring settlers specifically from the Greek world and beyond. In the later Middle Ages and into early modern times, *Genoese* traders frequented the coastal of Circassian territories. Politically, the region is usually demonstrated as a backwater, as the Circassians never created a powerful state of their own (Lewis, 2012).

Throughout the development stages of the Circassian Question and the transformation of its perception clearly, show the certain constants in the international position on the Russian and the Ottoman presence in the Caucasus. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Circassian question was repeatedly actualized in connection with geopolitical turbulence, provoking crises in international relations. Turning into a tool for the political push in the conflict for sovereignty, the Circassian Question punctually withdrew into the shades at the consolidation and stabilization of the geopolitical region (Gody, 2015: pp. 45-6). The most prominent feature of this historical period in this chapter is the series of wars between Russian and Circassian and the trans-regional developments surrounding the Circassia and the Caucasus.

Additionally, I try to identify Circassian historical background according to the primary and secondary sources. Using the term Circassian as a historical category of identification, the aim of this chapter is to explore the history of Circassians in general and explore the factors that contribute to the creation of Circassian identity in the later phase, specifically the relations between the Circassian identity and Circassian Question. Therefore, I focused on three parts, first of all, the historical background of Circassians before the 18<sup>th</sup> century,

second I will deepen for analyzing the situation of Circassia and the Northwest Caucasus in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries which I think it was the most important stage in the Circassian history, and then finally I will highlight the policies of regional and trans-regional actors and players in the term of *Circassian Question* formation.

## 2.2 Rise up in the History

It is possible that most probably the ancestors of the Circassians have had contacts with the peoples who have passed across the steppes from the North and across the mountain from the South such as Indo-Europeans<sup>99</sup> including *Cimmerians*<sup>100</sup>, *Scythians*<sup>101</sup>, *Sarmatians*<sup>102</sup>, *Alans*<sup>103</sup>, *Iranians*<sup>104</sup>, *Greeks*<sup>105</sup> and *Goths*<sup>106</sup>; and *Altaic*<sup>107</sup> people including *Huns*<sup>108</sup>,

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99. The *Proto-Indo-Europeans* were the prehistoric people of Eurasia who spoke Proto-Indo-European (PIE), the ancestor of the Indo-European languages according to linguistic reconstruction.

100. The *Kimmerians* were an ancient people, who appeared about 1000 BC and are mentioned later in 8th century BC in Assyrian records.

101. Or the *Scyths* were a group of Iranian people, known as the Eurasian nomads, who inhabited the western and central Eurasian steppes from about the 9th century BC until about the 1st century BC. Scythia was the Greek term for the grasslands north and east of the Black Sea. The *Scythian* languages belonged to the Eastern branch of the Iranian languages.

102. The *Sarmatians* were a large Iranian confederation that existed in classical antiquity, flourishing from about the 5th century BC to the 4th century AD.

103. Or the *Alani* were an Iranian nomadic pastoral people of antiquity and most possibly related to the *Massagetae*. The name Alan is an Iranian dialectical form of Aryan, a common self-designation of the Indo-Iranians.

104. An *Indo-European* ethno-linguistic group comprising the speakers of the Iranian languages including Iran and other nations in Central Asia, and the Middle East.

105. Or the *Hellenes* are an ethnic group native to Greece, Cyprus, southern Albania, Italy, Turkey, and Egypt, to a lesser extent, other countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

106. The *Goths* were an East Germanic people, two of whose branches, the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, played an important role in the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the emergence of Medieval Europe.

107. The *Altaic* is a proposed language family of central Eurasia and Siberia, now widely seen as discredited. The Turkic, Mongolic and *Tungusic* groups are invariably included in the family; some authors added Korean and *Japonic* languages.

108. The *Huns* were a nomadic people who lived in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia between the 4th century AD and the 6th century AD.

*Khazars*<sup>109</sup>, *Mongols*<sup>110</sup>; and lastly *Slavs*<sup>111</sup> such as *Cossacks*<sup>112</sup>, *Ukrainians*<sup>113</sup>, and *Russians*<sup>114</sup>. The communications and the interactions on these millennia were more linked to the exchange of cultural and linguistic issues, which can be obvious in the indigenous culture of North Caucasian people.

In my opinion, for the beginning, I should draw the Circassia in the site of the Bronze Age which mostly is characterized by *Maykop culture*<sup>115</sup> (3700 BC – 2200 BC) and later *Koban culture*<sup>116</sup> (1400 BC - 400 BC). Actually, the *Maykop culture* influences were mostly on the peoples who lived across the Koban plain where was a major Bronze Age archaeological culture in the western Caucasus region of southern Russia (Ivanova, 2007: pp. 7-39) (Map. 08). From the late second to early first millennium BC, the Koban tribes achieved a high level of cultural developments and they maintained commercial links with *Transcaucasia* (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 38-39), then we see the growth of *Koban Culture* (Figure. 06) at the late Bronze Age and Iron Age culture of the northern and central Caucasus. It is preceded by the *Colchian* culture of the western Caucasus and the *Kharachoi* culture<sup>117</sup> further east (Jaimoukha, 2004: pp. 23-28). Both of these cultures depended on the continuous flow of metal objects, especially weapons and their inhumation practices were characteristically Indo-European, typically in a pit, sometimes stone-lined, topped with a

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109. The *Khazars* were a semi-nomadic Turkic people, who created what for its duration was the most powerful polity to emerge from the break-up of the *Western Turkic Kaganate*.

110. The *Mongols* are an East-Central Asian ethnic group native to Mongolia and China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

111. The *Slavs* are the largest Indo-European ethno-linguistic group who speak the various Slavic languages of the larger Balto-Slavic linguistic group.

112. The *Cossacks* were a group of predominantly East Slavic-speaking people who became known as members of democratic, self-governing, semi-military communities, predominantly located in Southern Russia and in South-Eastern Ukraine.

113. The *Ukrainians* are an East Slavic ethnic group native to Ukraine.

114. The *Russians* are an East Slavic ethnic group native to Eastern Europe.

115. In Russian: Майкопская культура (3700 BC—3000 BC), was a major Bronze Age archaeological culture in the Western Caucasus region of Southern Russia.

116. Or Kuban in Russian: Кобанская культура (1100 to 400 BC), was a late Bronze Age and Iron Age culture of the northern and central Caucasus.

117. The term *Kharachoi* culture denotes the Early Bronze Age of Chechnya. Clay jugs and stone grain containers indicate a high level of development of trade and culture.

kurgan<sup>118</sup> (Vasmer, 1953-1958: p. 24). The Circassia in Bronze and Iron Ages was extremely rich in gold and silver artifacts; unusual for the time (Kohl, 2014; Gobejishvili, 2014) (Figure. 07).

The Iron Ages in the Northwest Caucasus and in the Circassia began about 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Some archeologists' founding has been attributed to the *Proto-Circassian* or *Proto-Maeotian* Culture. Their civilization lasted for some 1,200 years and their state was contemporaneous with Greek colonies, which were established in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 42-43).

From this centuries, common influences between the Caucasian and Iranian origins persisted, which fact can be corroborated by the wealth of artifacts of the *Maeotian*<sup>119</sup>-*Scythian* period that goes back to late seventh to fourth centuries BC, and to the *Maeotian-Sarmatian* period, from the last few centuries BC to the first few centuries AD. Therefore, I can conclude that the first bearers of the population were aboriginals in the Caucasus, who crossed the Don at the time of great *Sarmatian Migration*, together with the *Ants*, *Zikhis* (*Kissis*), *Chorvats*, *Vals*, and other small tribes (Map. 09) (Ibid: p. 36).

By the fifth century BC, the *Sindis*<sup>120</sup>, people kindred to the *Maeots*, had set up the magnificent *Sindica* civilization, which spread over the lower reaches of the Kuban, the Black Sea coastal strip between Anapa and Taman Peninsula, inclusive (Ibid, p. 43).

Generally, the early history of the Circassian peoples is obscure, but since 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, they have been witnessing a widespread wave of invaders and immigrants to the Northwest Caucasus. Historically, first time was by the *Sarmatians*<sup>121</sup> who started migrating westward, coming to dominate the closely related *Scythians* to the Northwest Caucasus. Archeologically, the Greeks also were known and were the first state to have established colonies and carried out extensive trade on the Circassian coast of the Black Sea, and their

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118. In English, the archaeological term kurgan is a loanword from East Slavic languages, equivalent to the archaic English term barrow, also known by the Latin loanword tumulus and terms such as burial mound. These are structures created by heaping earth and stones over a burial chamber, which is often made of wood.

119. The *Maeotians* were an ancient people dwelling along the Sea of Azov, which was known in antiquity as the "Maeotian marshes" or "Lake Maeotis". For more information, you can see: Boardman, John; Edwards, I. E. S. (1991). *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Volume 3. Part 2. Cambridge University Press.

120. The *Sindi* were an ancient people in the Taman Peninsula and the adjacent coast of the Pontus Euxinus (Black Sea), in the district called *Sindica*, which spread between the modern towns of Temryuk and Novorossiysk.

121. The *Sarmatians* were a large Iranian confederation that existed in classical antiquity, flourishing from about the 5th century BC to the 4th century AD.

influence is still clear. Because of Greek and Byzantine influence, later Christianity spread throughout the Northwest Caucasus between the 3-5<sup>th</sup> centuries (Minahan, 2000: p. 354).

The *Hun* invasion of the Northwest Caucasus in 374 AD caused the hinterland *Maeotians* to remove to the safety of the mountains. Attila attacked twice to Circassian lands, the first time they routed and had to flee to the safety of *Elbrus* (Map. 10). The *Hun Hordes*, inebriated by their might, swarmed up the heights but were overwhelmed by the agile defenders who were familiar with every nook and cranny. The Hun army was crushed and they expelled. The Byzantine Empire secured a foothold in the western Caucasus in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Fortresses were erected on the Black Sea coast and the *Taman Peninsula* (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 45-46).

This process was taken by the Bulgars<sup>122</sup> almost after the *Roman Era*. The *Bulgar state*, with its capital at *Phanagoria*<sup>123</sup>, reached the apex of its geopolitical sway from 632 to 668 AD, as *Old Great Bulgaria*<sup>124</sup> (Leif Inge Ree, 2013: p. 112). Under push from the Khazars<sup>125</sup> side, *Great Bulgaria* rejected quickly and collapsed, to be made out by the *Khazar Khaganate*<sup>126</sup> in 668. The Circassia, following the dissolution of the *Khazar Khaganate*, were integrated by the *Kingdom of Alania*<sup>127</sup> at the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries (Map. 11) (Zuckerman, 2007: p. 417).

This land remained fairly autonomous until the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Georgian princes, specifically the Reign of *Queen Tamar*<sup>128</sup> (Figure. 08), succeeded in reducing it to

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122. The *Bulgars* were Turkic semi-nomadic warrior tribes that flourished in the Pontic-Caspian steppe and the Volga region and north Caucasus during the 4th till 7th century.

123. *Phanagoria* in ancient Greek: Φαναγόρεια *Phanagóreia*, was the largest ancient Greek city on the Taman peninsula, spread over two plateaus along the eastern shore of the Cimmerian Bosphorus.

124. Old Great Bulgaria or Great Bulgaria in Byzantine Greek: Παλαιά Μεγάλη Βουλγαρία, *Palaiá Megálē Voulgaría*, also often known by the Latin names Magna Bulgaria and Patria Onoguria land, was a 7th Century state formed by the Bulgars and Onogurs on the western Pontic Steppe (modern southern Ukraine and south-west Russia).

125. The Khazars were a semi-nomadic Turkic people, who created what for its duration was the most powerful polity to emerge from the break-up of the Western Turkic Kaganate.

126. Or *Qaġanate*

127. Alania was a medieval kingdom of the Iranian Alans that flourished in the Northern Caucasus, roughly in the location of latter-day Circassia and modern North Ossetia–Alania, from the 8th or 9th century until its destruction by the Mongol invasion in 1238-39.

128. Tamar the Great (c. 1160 – 18 January 1213) reigned as the Queen of Georgia from 1184 to 1213, presiding over the apex of the Georgian Golden Age. For more information, you can see: Dondua, Varlam;

the condition of a province (Map. 12). Therefore, the *Georgian Kingdom* had an influence on the Circassia, adopting Christianity. Even the architecture of Circassian Church at that time is very similar to Georgians. This was the peak of Georgian authority, which expanded over most of the Caucasus. Circassia rebelled against Georgian rule towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but around 1390, during the rule of *King Bagrat VI*<sup>129</sup>, the Georgians mounted a punitive campaign against the insurrectionists and took many hostages (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 48).

During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Northwest Caucasus was overrun by *Mongol Hordes*, who launched two long massive invasions toward Circassia. In 1237, the assault on the North Caucasus began as the first Mongol Invasion (Anchalabze, 2001: p. 24). There is an important text by *William Rubruck*<sup>130</sup>, the envoy of the French Kingdom to *Sartaq Khan*<sup>131</sup>, traveled to the North Caucasus in 1253 about this invasion. He wrote that the Circassians had never ‘bowed to Mongol rule’, despite the fact that whole fifth of the Mongol armies was at that time dedicated to the task of squashing the whole of North Caucasian resistance (Jaimoukha, 2004: pp. 34-35). The second Mongol invasion was just as brutal as the first and happened by *Timurlane*<sup>132</sup> who first sent his Turkic tribe fighters and warriors to invade in 1390, and profoundly stepped up the invasion in 1395-1396 (Map. 13) (Anchalabze, 2001: p. 25). After these two invasions, the Northwest Caucasus soon passed under the rule of the Crimean Tatars and later under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Under the influence of these two Muslim states, Circassian society started to adopt Islam.

Nevertheless, the Circassians not only in the Caucasus, but even farther away in the Middle East and the North Africa had influenced and connected as between 1382 and 1517

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Berdzenishvili, Niko (1985). *Жизнь царицы царик Тамар* (The Life of the Queen of Queens Tamar). Tbilisi: Metsniereba.

129. Bagrat VI (c. 1439 – 1478), a representative of the *Imeretian branch of the Bagrationi royal house*, was a king of Imereti from 1463, and a king of Georgia from 1465 until his death.

130. William of Rubruck (c. 1220 – c. 1293) was a Flemish Franciscan missionary and explorer.

131. Sartaq Khan (died 1256) was the son of *Batu Khan* and Regent Dowager Khatun Boraqcin of Alchi Tatar. He succeeded Batu as khan of the Golden Horde.

132. Timur in Persian: تیمور *Temūr* (1336 – 1405), historically known as *Amir Timur* and was a Turco-Mongol conqueror. As the founder of the Timurid Empire in Persia and Central Asia, he became the first ruler in the Timurid dynasty.



and formed the *Burji dynasty*<sup>133</sup> under *Mamluk Sultanate*<sup>134</sup> that ruled over Egypt which it traces even older back to 1297 when *Lajin*<sup>135</sup> became Sultan of *Mamluk Sultanate* (McGregor, 2006: p. 15). Although the make-up of the *Burji Mamluk* dynasty was mostly Circassians, there were also *Abkhaz*, *Abaza*, and *Georgians* whom the *Arab Sultans* recruited to serve their kingdoms as a military force (Isichei, 1997: p.192) (Map. 14). They were deeply rooted in Egyptian society and the history of the region as well as for centuries; they have been part of the ruling elite in Egypt, having served in the high military, political and social positions. There is some evidence of linking between these *Mamelukes* and the *Kabardians*' expansion in the 14<sup>th</sup> century eastward of the Caucasus. In spite of noncentralized state, the *Kabardians* organized a homogeneous political unit like a state, whilst the other Circassians remained around tribal and clan schemas.

The 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> centuries can be named as the beginning of the struggle ages over the Caucasus among the regional powers, including the *Persians*, the *Russians*, and the *Ottomans* and it is an era of first Circassian immigration to the Middle East. The era when the Circassians mostly worked as military in the regional armies and Circassia was in the middle of their battles. For example, only the *Safavid*<sup>136</sup> (1501–1736) dynasty saw the importing and deporting of large numbers of Circassians to Persia, where many enjoyed prestige in the harems and in the *élite armies*<sup>137</sup>, while many others settled and deployed as craftsmen, laborers, farmers, and regular soldiers.

In the late 1550s, the ruler of one of the Kabardian noble families, Kemirgoquo<sup>138</sup>, struck a politico-military alliance with *Tsar Ivan IV*<sup>139</sup>, for mutual assistance against expansionist

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133. The *Burji* dynasty (Arabic: المماليك البرجية) was a Circassian Mamluk dynasty which ruled Egypt

134. The Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517) in Arabic: سلطنة المماليك *Salṭanat al-Mamālīk*, was a medieval realm spanning Egypt, the Levant, and Hejaz.

135. Lachin in Arabic: لاجين *Lajin*, full royal name al-Malik al-Mansour Hossam ad-Din Lachin al-Mansuri who was a Mamluk sultan of Egypt from 1296 to 1299.

136. The *Safavid* dynasty in Persian: دودمان صفوی *Dudmān e Safavi*, was one of the most significant ruling dynasties of Iran, often considered the beginning of modern Iranian history. For more information, you can see: Streusand, Douglas E. (2011). *Islamic Gunpowder Empires: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*. Boulder, Col: Westview Press.

137. So-called *Ghulams*

138. Under *Temriuk* Prince

139. Ivan IV Vasilyevich in Russian: Ива́н Васи́льевич, commonly known as *Ivan the Terrible* or *Ivan the Fearsome*, was the Grand Prince of Moscow from 1533 to 1547, then Tsar of All the Russia until his death in 1584.

attacks by the Persian and Ottoman Empires and the Tatars. It seems that those Circassians involved in this alliance were Christians (Shenfield, 1999: p.150). Almost in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Russia started pushing southwards the Caucasians in a process of continuous violations. In 1570, the Khan of the Tatars, threatened by the Russian encroachment, gathered a great force and marched on the lands of five mountains<sup>140</sup>. The Circassians were crushed and the victorious Khan forced some of them to embrace Islam and resettle on the bank of the *Kuban river*. The Russian bid to subdue the North Caucasus was checked in 1605 when a combined force of the *Shamkhal*<sup>141</sup> of Dagestan and the Ottomans dealt a severe blow to Tsarist ambitions. However, the Cossacks kept their presence in the area, but they were not yet under direct Russian influence (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 52). Thereafter, raids and counter-raids became the order of the day. In 1712, the Cossacks submitted to Tsar Peter the Great<sup>142</sup> and were incorporated into Russian war machine in the southern borders. They become a potent force in the Russian relentless drive to warm waters, playing a major part in the Caucasian War.

### 2.3 Circassia in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

When Russian Empire ambitions brought their troops to the Caucasus in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Circassia found a special situation among the Russo-Ottoman Wars<sup>143</sup> and the Russo-Persian Wars<sup>144</sup>. In fact, it was located at the front of the battles. Therefore, the situation of Circassia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was mostly characterized by the start of the Russo-Circassian War in 1763 and resistance movements for their identity. This century finally ends by the conquest of *Anapa*<sup>145</sup> and capture of *Sheikh Mansur*<sup>146</sup> in 1791.

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140. Which calls now *Pyatigorsk* in Russian: Пятигóрск is a city in Stavropol Krai.

141. *Shamkhal* is the title for the rulers of *Kumukh* in Dagestan during the 8th-17th centuries.

142. Peter the Great in Russian: Пётр Великий, ruled the Tsardom of Russia and later the Russian Empire from 7 May 1682 until his death in 1725. For more information, you can see: Anisimov, Evgenii V. (2015) *The Reforms of Peter the Great: Progress through Violence in Russia* (Routledge).

143. Or Ottoman–Russian wars were a series of wars between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire between the 16th and 20th centuries. In this case, I mean the wars of 1768–1774 and 1787–1792.

144. Specifically on 1722–23 and 1796; for more detail you can see: Andreeva, Elena (2007). *Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism*. Routledge: p.38.

145. *Anapa* in Russian: *Ана́па*, is a town in Krasnodar Krai, Russia, located on the northern coast of the Black Sea near the Sea of Azov.

146. Sheikh al-Mansur (1760–1794) was a Chechen Islamic religious and military leader who led the Circassian and Caucasian resistance against Catherine the Great during the late 18th century.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *Kabarda* extended across the central third of the north Caucasus piedmont from east of Circassia proper to the Chechen. The fort of *Mozdok* on the western side of *Terek* river was built in Kabardian territory and a line of the fortress was checked out the *Terek* to *Kizlyar*<sup>147</sup>.

Generally, from the time of *Peter I*, the interest in the Caucasus grew. In his demand for outlets to the southern seas, *Peter I* had his eyes on the warm seas for sailing and shipping in all seasons. Progress in this direction met with the resistance of Ottoman and the Crimea. The expedition against Azov and its capture in 1696 and the trade between Russia and Persia aggravated an age-old enmity. Ottoman Empire, through the Crimea, tried to consolidate its position there, particularly in Circassia. Thus, the Crimean Khans, *Qaplan I* Giray in 1707 and Saadet IV Giray in 1724 undertook devastating raids on Kabarda. The Crimean Khans, in their turn, pointed to the articles in the 1713 peace treaty, according to which the Circassia, including the Kabardians, were recognized as dependent on the Crimean Khan. Occasionally, the *Crimean Khans* attacked *Kabarda*, in order to consolidate the Muslim faith there by force, as was the case in 1717, when the *Crimean hordes* attended outside *Maykop*. On another episode, the wars between the *Porte* and *Persia* served as an excuse (Hammer-Purgstall, 1856: pp. 201-206). When the *Porte* declared war on Persia, the Sultan ordered *Qaplan I* Giray to advance on the Northern Caucasus and further on Persia (1733), which resulted in a war between Russia and the Crimea. This constant interference in Circassia affairs by *Turks* and *Crimeans* on the one hand and Russians on the other was also facilitated by internal strife in *Kabarda*. It is natural that the *Kabardian* issue should have been the object of negotiation and have found a place in the *Belgrade* peace treaty of September 18, 1739 (Namitok, 1956: p. 17).

In 1771, the Russians defeated the *Kabardians* on the *Malka River* and subjugated some of *Lesser Kabarda*. In 1777-78, the path was expanded from *Mozdok* northwest to the *Azov Sea*. In 1779, the *Kabardians* were beaten, failure of 50 princes and 350 nobles and a border was appointed along the *Malka* and *Terek* rivers. It might look that the Circassians should have organized a united state to oppose the Russians, but the reality of region remains that the unorganized Circassians overspread longer than the organized *Murids*. Then the territory of Circassians was gradually pushed toward the southern zones between 1763 and 1793. The Russians constructed a line of fortresses that were used as springboards for further outreach.

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147. In Russian: *Кизляр*, is a town in the Republic of Dagestan, Russia, located on the border with the Chechen Republic in the delta of the Terek River.

By the end of the century, most of *Kabarda* was under imperial Russian control. Some Kabardians, later dubbed as *Muhajir*<sup>148</sup>, immigrant or fugitive Circassians, who refused to accept Russian hegemony, moved west to what is now known as the *Karachay-Cherkess Republic* and the *Adyghea Republic*.

at the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russians built no viable gains in Circassia. In 1829, Ottoman gave Russia a free hand in the Caucasus in the treaty of Adrianople, in spite of the reality that the Ottomans had no assertion whatsoever Circassia. afterward, Russia embarked on a harsh war of abrasion, which met with furious resistance for 35 years. The odds were greatly accumulated against the Circassians, whose limited soldiers and manpower were no matches to the ongoing stream of cannon fodder unleashed at them. One is persuaded to say that the Circassians, to their mortal harm, had never really grasped the full bound of the cruelty of the Russian war machine.

The Circassians performed a notably savage and long-lasting resistance to Russian sovereignty. Disappointed by the occasional rekindling of resistance in apparently conciliated the Circassian villages, Russia in 1860 started a campaign to forcibly resettle Circassians eastbound of the Kuban River. By 1864, the removal had mostly been done, but nearly the entire Circassian population instead of immigrating to the Ottoman Empire, with many thousands dying of starvation and disease on the way. A report of this Circassian resistance has been written by *Henze* (1990), though many details remain to be documented.

## 2.4 Russo–Ottoman War

The Russo–Ottoman War<sup>149</sup> was a series of wars between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire that happened from the 16<sup>th</sup> until 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in different parts of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. It was one of the interminable series of armed conflicts in European history (Timothy, 2014). Since these wars have had a major impact on the *Circassian History* especially on the Russo-Circassian Wars, I am referring to this issue in this chapter. The most effective wars which had an impact on Circassian History, from my point of view were included in the Russo-Ottoman War from 1735 to 1739 with coagulation

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148. *Muhajir* or *Mohajir* (Arabic: مهاجر muhājir; pl. مهاجرون muhājirūn) is an Arabic word meaning emigrant. In English, this term and its derivatives have been applied to a number of groups and individuals: Muhacir (Turkish variant), Caucasian Muslims who immigrated to Anatolia, from the late 18th century until the end of the 20th century.

149. Alternatively, the Russian - Turkish wars in Russian: Русско - Турецкие войны and in Turkish: Osmanlı-Rus Savaşları.

of Belgrade Treaty, Russo-Ottoman War from 1768 to 1774 with coagulation of Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, Russo-Ottoman War from 1787 to 1792 with coagulation of Jassy Treaty, Russo-Ottoman War from 1806 to 1812 with coagulation of Bucharest Treaty, Russo-Ottoman War from 1828 to 1829 with coagulation of Adrianople Treaty and finally Crimean War from 1853 to 1856 with coagulation of Paris Treaty. The process of wars caused the Russian Empire to reach the Ottoman borders in the Caucasus, where was located between three regional powers such as Persians, Ottomans, and Russians. Most probably could be concluded that the greatest impact was on Circassia, such that almost at the end of the Crimean War with coagulation of Paris Treaty in 1856, the Caucasian Wars and the Russo-Circassian Wars ended with catastrophic results, and then the entire of North Caucasus was annexed to Russian Empire<sup>150</sup>.

#### **2.4.1 Belgrade Treaty (1739)**

At the end of the Russo-Ottoman War (1735–1739) (Map. 15), the *Belgrade Treaty* known as the *Belgrade* peace treaty signed in Belgrade, *Habsburg Kingdom of Serbia*<sup>151</sup>, by the Ottoman Empire on one side and the *Habsburg Monarchy*<sup>152</sup> on the other, which ended the *Austro-Turkish War* (1737–39) or *Austro-Russian-Turkish War* (1735–39) (Stone, 2006: p. 64). It should be noted that this war also represented Russia's continuing struggle for access to the Black Sea in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During this war, there was another point, which happened in 1737, and Austria joined the war on Russia's side, therefore it is known in historiography as the Austro-Turkish War. This series of War begun because of the raids of the Crimean Tatars toward *Cossack Hetmanate*<sup>153</sup> at the end of 1735 and the Crimean khan's military campaign in the Caucasus. It made the Russian Dnieper Army react under the

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150. For more details: Aksan, Virginia (2007). *Ottoman Wars, 1700–1860: An Empire Besieged*. Pearson Education Ltd.

151. The Kingdom of Serbia was a province of the Habsburg monarchy from 1718 to 1739. It was formed from the territories to the south of the rivers Sava and Danube, corresponding to the Sanjak of Smederevo, conquered by the Habsburgs from the Ottoman Empire in 1717. It was abolished and returned to the Ottoman Empire in 1739.

152. The Habsburg Monarchy or Empire is an unofficial appellation among historians for the countries and provinces that were ruled by the junior Austrian branch of the House of Habsburg between 1521 and 1780 and then by the successor branch of Habsburg-Lorraine until 1918.

153. In Ukrainian: Гетьманщина, Het'manshchyna, known as the Ruthenian State or Zaporizhian Host, was a Ukrainian Cossack state in Central Ukraine between 1649 and 1764.

command of Field Marshal Burkhard Christoph von Münnich<sup>154</sup> and their attack to the Crimean fortifications at Perekop<sup>155</sup> and occupied Bakhchysarai<sup>156</sup> (Tucker, 2010: p. 732). In the resulting Belgrade treaty in 1739, for the first time the independence of Eastern Circassia where I mean *Kabarda* was formally guaranteed in the treaty by both sides (Hupchick, 2002: p.213). Article six of the Treaty stated: “As for the two Kabardas, Greater and Lesser, and the nations that inhabit therein, the two parties agree that the two Kabardias shall remain free, and will submit to neither of the two empires, but will be considered as a boundary between the two; and on the part of the Sublime Porte, neither the Turks nor the Tatars shall interfere in the internal affairs of these two countries, and, according to old custom, the Russians shall continue to have the right to levy hostages from the two *Kabardias*, the *Sublime Porte* being also free to levy the same for the same purpose; and in case the above-mentioned peoples of the Kabardia give ground for complaint by either of the two powers, both are permitted to punish them” (Nolde, 1953: p. 341).

#### 2.4.2 Küçük Kaynarca Treaty (1774)

The next Russo-Ottoman War (1768–1774) was also an militarized crisis that fetched the *Eastern Circassia* or *Kabarda* into the Russian realm of domination. The primary reason for this armed conflict was the intricate war within the European diplomatic mechanism for an equilibrium of authority that was passable to other European states, rather than Russian dominance. Russia could have taken benefit of the tired Ottoman Empire, the end of the *Seven Years War*, and passed up France as the continent’s primal martial power. The Ottoman Army losses were diplomatic in matter seeing its full reduction as a warning to Christian Europe, and the beginning of the *Eastern Question*<sup>157</sup> that would injure the

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154. In Russian Христофóр Анто́нович Миних (1683 – 1767), was a German soldier-engineer who became a field marshal and political figure in the Russian Empire.

155. The *Perekop* in Ukrainian: Перекоп; Russian: Перекоп; Crimean Tatar: Or Qapı; Greek: Τάφρος, is an urban-type settlement located on the Perekop Isthmus connecting the Crimean peninsula to the Ukrainian mainland. It is known for the Fortress *Or Qapı* that served as the gateway to Crimea.

156. The *Bakhchysarai* in Ukrainian: Бахчисарáй; Crimean Tatar: Bağçasaray; Russian: Бахчисарáй; Turkish: Bahçesaray; Persian: باغچه سرای, is a city in central Crimea, as well as the former capital of the Crimean Khanate.

157. In diplomatic history, the "Eastern Question" refers to the strategic competition and political considerations of the European Great Powers in light of the political and economic instability in the Ottoman Empire from the late 18th to early 20th centuries. For more information, you can see: Anderson, M.S. (1966). *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923: A Study in International Relations*.

continent until the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Schroeder, 1994, p. 35). In the Caucasian front, Russia had some troops spread out north of the Caucasus. In 1769 as a diversion, they sent *Gottlieb Heinrich Totleben*<sup>158</sup> south into *Georgia* and he became the first commander to have brought an organized Russian military force in *Transcaucasia* through the *Darial Gorge*<sup>159</sup>. This was the first time Russian troops had crossed the North Caucasus and fought in the South Caucasus with Ottomans (Avtorkhanov and Broxup, 1992: p. 73). On the steppes north of the mountains, the later-famous *Matvei Platov*<sup>160</sup> and 2000 men fought 25000 Ottomans and Crimeans (Mikaberidze, 2005: p.304). Finally, the Russian military under the command of Alexander Suvorov was in charge of to rout the Ottoman Army near *Kozludzha*<sup>161</sup> on 20 June 1774. Russia used this win to enforce Ottomans to surrender to Russia's priorities in the treaty especially about Caucasus and Circassia. A bit late, the peace treaty signed on 21 July 1774, in *Küçük Kaynarca*<sup>162</sup>. The treaty was a most pejorative blow to the once-capable Ottoman sphere. It would also stop to foretell several future crises between the Ottomans and Russia. It would be only one of many efforts by Russia to take control of Ottoman lands. Because of this war, Russia could gain the Eastern Circassia or Kabarda and some part of the coastal region in the Western Circassia around the Black Sea. Ottomans ceded to Russia two key seaports, Azov and Kerch, allowing the Russian Navy and merchant fleet direct access to the Black Sea. Therefore, Russia quickly exploited *Küçük Kaynarca* for an easy excuse to go to war and take more territory from the Ottoman Empire (Schroeder, 1994).

The Kabardians reacted to this agreement by intensifying the war. The Russians also began to be more aggressive. They erected fortifications between Mozdok and Azov, under the guidance of *Alexander Suvorov*<sup>163</sup>. The number of fortresses was established and settled by *Volga Cossacks* in 1777-1780. The Kabardians, in alliance with other North Caucasian

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158. In Russian: Готлиб-Генрих Тотлебен, was a Saxon-born Russian Empire general known for his adventurism and contradictory military career during the Seven Years' War and, then, the Russo-Turkish War (1768–74) as a commander of the first Russian expeditionary force in Georgia.

159. *Darial Gorge* or pass is known Georgian Military Road in Russian.

160. Count Matvei Ivanovich Platov was a Russian general who commanded the Don Cossacks in the Napoleonic wars and founded Novocherkassk as the new capital of the Don Host Province.

161. Battle of *Kozludzha* fought on 20 June (Old Style - June 9) 1774 near the village of Kozludzha (now Suvorovo, Bulgaria) was one of the final and decisive battles of the Russo-Turkish War (1768–74).

162. Today *Kaynardzha* in Bulgaria.

163. Alexander Vasilyevich Suvorov in Russian: Александр Васильевич Суворов; 1730-1800) was a Russian military leader, considered a national hero for Russians.

peoples, began to display some military activities in the spring of 1779. Nearly all of the Northern Caucasus, except South Dagestan, was involved in this struggle. At the end of September 1779, the bloodiest of all battles were fought between the Kabardians and the Russian forces. Taken unawares, most of the Kabardians perished. About 50 princes and over 350 nobles fell in this battle, refusing to surrender (Nमितok, 1956: p. 17).

### 2.4.3 Jassy Treaty (1792)

The War (1787–1792) involved an unsuccessful effort by the Ottoman Empire to regain territories lost to the Russian Empire in the course of the previous Russo-Ottoman War (1768–1774). The Treaty of Jassy, signed at *Jassy*<sup>164</sup> city, was affirming Russian increasing authority in the Black Sea (Hitchens, 2012, p. 20). Accordingly, the Treaty of Jassy, the *Dniester* was made the Russian frontier in Europe, while *the Russian Asiatic frontier* - the Kuban River - carried on unchanged (Sicker, 2001: p. 82). The War geographically did not take place in Circassia and the Caucasus but consequently, in the next decades, caused the Russian Imperial Army to have easier conquer in the southern Kuban River and pressurized the front military line toward Circassia.

After the *Porte*'s unsuccessful war and the conclusion of peace in Jassy on December 29, 1791, the situation of *Kabarda* and of *Circassia* in general worsened. *Catherine the Great*, made a humane gesture in disapproving the action of *General Ivan Gudovich*<sup>165</sup>. Commander of the Caucasian army, who had compelled some Circassian tribes to swear the oath of allegiance as Russian subjects. She told them that she released them from this oath and had “ordered them to be accepted as free peoples, dependent on no one” (Dubrovin, 1986: p. 276). She sent a letter to *Gudovich* in 1792 with this text: “It is not only by force of arms that you should conquer people who live in inaccessible mountains and who have safe shelters there from our troops, but rather through justice that you should win their trust in you, and through mildness that you should assuage bitterness, win hearts, and teach them how to behave toward Russians” (Ibid: p. 293), but this did not prevent the Russians from continuing to use force of arms. The building of fortresses on the line and in the upper reaches of the *Kuban* continued. The break in communications between Eastern and Western

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164. Alternatively, *Iasi* in old Moldavia and presently in Romania.

165. Count Ivan Vasilyevich Gudovich in Russian: Иван Васильевич Гудович; (1741–1820) was a Russian noble and military leader of Ukrainian descent. His exploits included the capture of Hadji Bey (1789) and the conquest of maritime Dagestan (1807).



Circassia became permanent and the *Black Sea Cossacks* were been inhabited on *Taman peninsula* by 1792.

#### **2.4.4 Bucharest Treaty (1812)**

According to this Treaty<sup>166</sup>, the Ottoman Empire conceded the eastern half of *Moldavia* to Russia, in spite of the fact that *Moldavia* was supposed to be guarded (Robarts, 2008: p. 94). This caused Russia as new player in the Danube area with the militarily, economically, diplomatically, and beneficial frontier. In *Transcaucasia*, the Ottomans refused to abide by its demands to the most of western Georgia but kept the control of *Akhalkalaki*<sup>167</sup>, *Poti*<sup>168</sup>, and *Anapa* which previously captured by the *Russo-Georgian troops*, therefore still some part of Western Circassia remained under the Ottoman's domain (Baddeley, 1908: Chapter.V). Actually, in every advocacy and defense of the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus, Anapa fortress played a key role in the military plans. Therefore, to support the fortress from the Russian attack, Circassians participated in the Russo-Ottoman wars in the side of the Ottomans (Esadze, 1993: pp. 17, 26, 28).

#### **2.4.5 Adrianople Treaty (1829)**

The Treaty of Adrianople<sup>169</sup> gave Russia, the most eastern shore of the *Black Sea* and the *Danube* area which signed on 14 September 1829. The treaty was the result of The Russo-Ottoman War (1828–1829) which was sparked by the Greek War of Independence<sup>170</sup> (Acton, 1907: p. 202). Although the main fighting was in the west of Caucasus front. *Paskevich*<sup>171</sup>'s main aims were to tie down as many Ottoman troops as possible, to take back the Ottoman

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166. The treaty was approved by Alexander I of Russia on June 11, just 13 days before Napoleon's invasion of Russia commenced, that allowed many of the Russian soldiers in the Balkans to be brought back to in time for the expected attack of Napoleon.

167. *Akhalkalaki* is a town in Georgia's southern region of Samtskhe-Javakheti where most of inhabitants are Aemnians.

168. *Poti* is a port city in Georgia, located on the eastern Black Sea coast in the region of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti in the west of the country.

169. Also called the Treaty of *Edirne*.

170. Also known as the *Greek Revolution* was a successful war of independence waged by Greek revolutionaries against the Ottoman Empire between 1821 and 1832.

171. Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich in Russian: Ива́н Фёдорович Паске́вич (1782 – 1856) was an imperial Russian military leader. For his victories, he was made Count of Yerevan in 1828 and Namestnik of the Kingdom of Poland in 1831.

forts on the Black Sea coast that supported the Circassians and might be used to soil forces, and to push the western boundary to some favorable point. At the end of this battle, Ottomans recognized Russian domination and sovereignty over the Western Caucasus. Actually, the *Sultan* recognized Russian possession of *Georgia* with *Poti*, *Imeretia*, *Mingrelia*, *Guria* till the fortresses of *Akhaltzikhe* and *Akhalkalaki* and even control of *Anapa* in Circassia (Tucker, 2010: p.1154). Therefore, given its events of the previous year when the *Khanates* of *Yerevan* and *Nakhichevan* had been ceded by Persia to Russia with coagulation of *Turkmenchay Treaty*<sup>172</sup>, Russia managed to dominate almost the entire South Caucasus by 1829. It should be noted when the Ottoman Empire abandoned all its rights to the Circassian coast by this treaty, the Russo-Circassian War entered to the new phase from 1830 till the final defeat of Circassians in 1864.

After the end of the War, the Ottoman Empire relinquished North Caucasus to Russia and the Russian Empire began her military operations in order to really submit her new “subjects”. In response to it the Abadzekhs, Shapsugs, Ubykhs and other Circassian tribes convened “National Allegiance Convention”<sup>173</sup> in 1830 and united their efforts against the Russian aggression. The continuing escalation of the Russian military operations in Circassia compelled the National Allegiance Convention to send an appeal “The Declaration of Independence of Circassia” to other governments.

#### **2.4.6 Crimean War (1853 - 1856) & Paris Treaty (1856)**

The Crimean War was an armed conflict struggled from October 1853 to February 1856 in which the Russian Empire lost to an alliance of the Ottoman Empire, Britain, France, and Sardinia. It was one of the greatest battles of *European History*. In addition, this war was one of the first conflicts to use pioneer and modern technologies of that time such as explosive naval shells, telegraphs, and railways (Figure. 09) (Royle, 2000).

In the end, the Treaty of Paris of 1856 appointed the Crimean War between the Russian Empire and an alliance of the Ottoman Empire, the Second French Empire, the Kingdom of

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172. The Treaty of *Turkmenchay* was an agreement between Persia and the Russian Empire, which concluded the Russo-Persian War (1826–28). By the treaty, Persia ceded to Russia control of several areas in the South Caucasus: the Erivan Khanate, the Nakhchivan Khanate, and the remainder of the Talysh Khanate. The boundary between Russian and Persia was set at the Aras River. These territories comprise modern-day Armenia, the southern parts of the modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan, as well as Iğdır Province (now part of Turkey).

173. In Circassian: Лэпкъ Тхьэрыло Хасэ

Sardinia, and the British Empire (Albin, 1912: pp. 170-180). The treaty, at the *Congress of Paris*, signed on 30 March 1856, caused the Black Sea impartial territory, closing it to all warships, and prohibited fortifications and the presence of armaments on its shores. The situations for the return of *Sevastopol* and other towns in the south of *Crimea* were clear; “not to establish any naval or military arsenal on the Black Sea coast”. It was actually the sign of the ultimate defeat of the Ottoman military in the Caucasian front. During the process of the signature of the *Treaty of Paris*, *Sefer Bey Zanuko*<sup>174</sup> insisted on preparation and a provision, which would put Circassia under the Ottoman suzerainty. However, the Circassian Question was not on the agenda of the Ottoman delegation in Paris (Polovinkina: p. 143). This war was the last chance for Circassian to stay independent, however, after the treaty, even the Caucasian war got finished and Russians captured all Caucasus.

## 2.5 Caucasian War

After destroying the Golden Horde at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the emergence of a geographic gap, Russia began to push south toward the northern steppes of the Caucasus in a process of gradual encroachments. As time went on, several Caucasian principalities retracted southwards towards the mountains. After several retreats, Russia gained access to Persian and Ottoman-dominated areas (Jaimoukha, 2001, p. 58). This process lasted for almost a century and was accompanied by successive wars and resistance of Caucasian peoples against Russians, which it is called the *Caucasian War*<sup>175</sup>. This series battles and resistances historically counted from 1763 until 1864 as an invasion of the Caucasus by the *Russian Imperial Army*<sup>176</sup>, which resulted in Russia's annexation of the areas of the North Caucasus (King, 2008). In the local resources, especially those who were *Muslims*, these resistances were described as *Jihad*<sup>177</sup> or *Holy Wars* (Kemper, 2010).

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174. He was a Circassian nobleman and independence activist. He took part in the various stages of the Russo-Circassian War in both a military and a political capacity. For more information, you can see: Khoon, Yahya (2015). Prince of Circassia: Sefer Bey Zanuko and the Circassian Struggle for Independence". *Journal of Caucasian Studies*. V.1 (1): 69–92.

175. In Russian: Кавказская война *Kavkazskaya vojna*

176. In Russian: Русская императорская армия *ruskaya imperatorskaya armiya*

177. Jihad in English: /dʒɪˈhɑːd/; in Arabic: جهاد *jihād*, is an Arabic word which literally means striving or struggling, especially with a praiseworthy aim.

There is a special point in this war when Russian could have controlled of the *Georgian Military Highway*<sup>178</sup> in the center of Caucasus and then it made to divide the Caucasian War into two geographic part; first the Russo-Circassian War in the west and second, the *Murid War*<sup>179</sup> in the east. Actually, the war in the Northeast Caucasus, which is more popular and widely known with its *Holy War* or *Jihad* and especially with its legendary leader *Sheikh Shamil*<sup>180</sup>, took place simultaneously and with many parallels with the war in Circassia. However, the nature of the resistance in the Northeast Caucasus was radically different from the war in *Circassia* (Dowling, 2014, pp. 728–730). Islam was still insufficiently established in *Circassia* during the wars, therefore it did not shape as a Holy War like eastern part. On the other hand, there had always been *Sufi* groups in the eastern part, especially in *Dagestan* and *Chechnya* including *Naqshbandi*<sup>181</sup> and *Qadiriyya*<sup>182</sup> orders were noted for their strict adherence to religious law<sup>183</sup> and the duty of a *Murid* or disciple to his teacher or *Murshid*. Howsoever, this was sincerely spiritual, under Russian push it became merged with the notion of *Gazivat*<sup>184</sup> and *Jihad* or *Holy War*. The ideas of religious duty, subordination and

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178. Georgian Military Road in Russian: Военно-Грузинская дорога *Voyenno-Gruzinskaya doroga*, is the historic name for a major route through the Caucasus from Georgia to Russia. Geographically, it is called *Darial Gorge* or pass.

179. The Murid War (1829–1859) also known as the Russian Conquest of Chechnya and Dagestan was the eastern phase of the Caucasian War in which Russia conquered the independent peoples of the Caucasus Mountains.

180. He was an Avar political and religious leader of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus. He was a leader of anti-Russian resistance in the Caucasian War and was the third Imam of the Caucasian Imamate (1840–1859).

181. The *Naqshbandi* or *Naqshbandiyah* in Arabic: نقشبندية, is a major Sunni spiritual order of Sufism. It got its name from Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari and traces its spiritual lineage to the Islamic prophet Muhammad, through Abu Bakr, the first Caliph and Muhammad's companion. Some Naqshbandi masters trace their lineage through Ali his son-in-law and successor, in keeping with most other Sufis. For more information, you can see: Itzhak Weismann (2007). *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition*. Routledge.

182. The *Qadiriyya* in Arabic: القادرية, are members of the Qadiri tariqa (Sufi order). The tariqa got its name from Abdul Qadir Gilani (1077–1166, also transliterated Jilani), who was from Gilan. The order relies strongly upon adherence to the fundamentals of Islam. For more information, you can see: Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The Special Sufi Paths (Taqiras)", in *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. 86–96.

183. *Sharia* law, or Islamic law (Arabic: شريعة) is the religious law forming part of the Islamic tradition.

184. Or *Ghazi* (غازي, gāzī) is an Arabic term originally referring to an individual who participates in ghazw (غزو, gāzw), meaning military expeditions or raiding; after the emergence of Islam, it took on new connotations

obedience to a master, tough and strict religious law and *Holy War* became the base of an armed-theocratic state that opposed the massive Russian Empire for thirty years. The religion was an important factor for holding together the many independent villages, families, and clans, but it should be noted that the Circassians held out even longer without the help of a theocratic state. *Moshe Gammer* (1994) in his book 'Muslim Resistance to the Tsar' gives a complex account of the religious origin of the movement, which will not be reproduced here. In addition, I should mention that this war was the first attempt for both eastern and western parts to make their identities through a new phenomenon, which I mean Russians in their territories.

In summary, the main part of the war was accomplished during the reigns of three successive *Russian Tsars*: *Alexander I* (1801–1825), *Nicholas I* (1825–1855), and *Alexander II* (1855–1881). The outstanding Russian commanders were included *Aleksey Petrovich Yermolov*<sup>185</sup> in 1816–1827, *Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov* in 1844–1853, and *Aleksandr Baryatinskiy* in 1853–1856.

The first period of the invasion terminated coincidentally with the death of Alexander I and the *Decembrist Revolt* in 1825. It attained amazingly little success, especially compared with the recent Russian victory over the *Great Army of Napoleon* (1812). Between 1825 and 1833, little military activities happened in the Caucasus against the North Caucasians indigenous as wars with Ottoman (1828-1829) and with Persian (1826-1828) occupied the Russians. After significant achievements in both wars, Russia resumed attacking the Caucasus against the several rebelling local ethnic groups in the North Caucasus. Russian

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of religious warfare. The related word *ghazwa* (غزوة *ġazwah*) is a singulative form meaning a battle or military expedition, often one led by the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

185. Aleksey Petrovich Yermolov in Russian: *Алексе́й Петро́вич Ермо́лов*, (1777 – 1861) was a Russian Imperial general of the 19th century who commanded Russian troops in the Caucasian War.

units again met resistance, notably led by *Imam Qazi Mullah*<sup>186</sup>, *Imam Gamzat-bek*<sup>187</sup>, *Hadji Murad*<sup>188</sup>, *Sheikh Mansur*<sup>189</sup>, and *Imam Shamil*.

The Eastern part war ended in 1859; the Russians could capture *Imam Shamil*, forced him to surrender and crumble, to swear faithfulness to the *Tsar*, and then banished him to Central Russia. Afterward, having gained achievement in the east, Russian forces removed remaining opposition in the west during the next several years. Ultimately, as many as Circassians in the west, were relocated from their ancestral lands. As respects, the war in the Western part resumed with the Circassians renovating the battle. A statement of *Tsar Alexander II* declared the end of hostilities on June 2, 1864 (Derluguian, 2009) (Map. 16).

### 2.5.1 Murid War

The main part of *Murid War* held between 1829 until 1859 which it calls the Russian Conquest of Chechnya and Dagestan in the eastern phase of the *Caucasian War*. Later, the *Dagestani* and *Chechen* tribes joined in the *Caucasian Imamate*<sup>190</sup>, a military-theocratic state that held out for thirty years. This new local state was created by *Ghazi Muhammad* in 1829–1832 and governed by *Imam Shamil* from 1834 until his submission in 1859. It should be noted that before *Murid War*, there were some resistance in the eastern of Caucasus that I do not count it under this war, specifically by *Sheikh Mansur* (1760–1794) who was a *Chechen* Islamic religious and military leader that led the resistance against *Catherine the Great*'s imperialist expansion into the Caucasus during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

After establishing control over the Southern Caucasus as discussed above, Russia headed for the North Caucasus, a region that had long stood firm against invasion. While *East North*

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186. Or *Imam Ghazi Muhammad* as an Islamic scholar and ascetic, who was the first Imam of the Caucasian Imamate (from 1828 to 1832).

187. Or *Hamza-Bek ibn Ali Iskandar Bek al-Hutsali* (1789-1834) was the second imam of the Caucasian Imamate, who succeeded Ghazi Mollah upon his death in 1832.

188. *Hadji Murad* in Russian: Хаджи-Мурат, was an important Avar leader during the Caucasian resistance in Dagestan and Chechnya in 1811–1864.

189. Also known as *Sheikh al-Mansur*, was a Chechen Islamic religious and military leader who led the resistance against Catherine the Great's imperialist expansion into the Caucasus. He remains a hero of the Chechen people and its struggle for independence.

190. The Caucasian Imamate, also known as the Caucasus Imamate in Arabic: إمامة القوقاز `Imāmat al-Qawqāz, was the state established by the imams in Dagestan and Chechnya during the early-to-mid 19th century in the Northern Caucasus, to fight against the Russian Empire during the Caucasian War, where Russia sought to conquer the Caucasus in order to secure communications with its new territories south of the mountains.

*Caucasians* actively resisted the Russians, when *Sheikh Shamil*'s forces finally succumbed to the Russians. There are several reasons for *Sheikh Shamil*'s defeat. First of all, he only could assemble the central and eastern parts of the North Caucasus. Circassians in the western region of the North Caucasus were worn out after their own lengthy battles against *Russian Tsar*. Additionally, the Circassians did not view the political regime of Imamate applied by Chechen and Dagestani as rightful and legitimate. (Gafarli, 2014: pp. 172-175)

With the end of the *Crimean War* in 1856, Russia was free to turn its full attention to the Caucasus. On 22 July 1856, *Prince Aleksandr Baryatinsky*<sup>191</sup> was appointed both *Viceroy* and commander-in-chief and set about reorganizing the armies. Earlier, from 1848 to 1856 he took a leading part in all the chief military events in the Caucasus, his most notable exploits being his operations against *Shamil* in *Chechnya*. The general plan for the future was for the northern army to move southeast through *Chechnya* and link up with the *Dagestan* army in the valley of the *Andi Koysu*<sup>192</sup> while the southern army moved northward (Chisholm, 1911: pp. 455-456).

*Shamil* also was well known in particular for his capture of two princesses in 1854. He was defeated in 1861. A bold warrior, he would not have been defeated if the *Crimean war* (1853-1856) had not freed the Russians' hand to bring the full force of their army to bear on the uprising in the Caucasus.

Actually, *Murid* is a follower of a *Shaykh*<sup>193</sup> and had the two lives in a *Khaniqah*<sup>194</sup> or monastery and lead a very austere existence. Finally, the *Shaykh* leads the *Murid* on the direction of *Tariqa*<sup>195</sup>. The term '*Murid*' is also used for an individual who fights voluntarily for social equality and for national independence. In this context, *Muridism* is accepted as a chapter of *Sufism* in which the apprentice follows the orders of an *Imam* who leads the *Ghazavat* or *Holy War* for equality and public integrity (Figure. 10).

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191. Aleksandr Ivanovich Baryatinsky in Russian: Александр Иванович Барятинский; (1815 - 1879) was a Russian General and Field Marshal (from 1859), Prince, governor of the Caucasus.

192. The Andi-Koysu in Russian: Андийское Койсу - Andiyskoye Koysu, in Georgian: ანდის ვიხსტუ - Andis Qoisu) is a river and valley in Georgia and Dagestan.

193. Sheikh is an honorific title in the Arabic language.

194. Khaniqah in Persian: خانقاه, is a building designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood or tariqa and is a place for spiritual retreat and character reformation.

195. A tariqa in Arabic: طريقة *tariqah*, is a school or order of Sufism, or specifically a concept for the mystical teaching and spiritual practices of such an order with the aim of seeking Haqiqa, which translates as "ultimate truth".

### 2.5.2 Caucasian Military Line

The Caucasian Military Line or in some sources '*Caucasus Line Cossack Host*' and 'The North Caucasus Line' was a line of Russian forts and Cossack settlements along the north side of the Caucasus which were originating from 16<sup>th</sup> century with a few free Cossacks near the Caspian Sea, to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the line was pushed west and used as a basis to gain the southern mountains and to occupy the northern steppes. Actually, it was a military line created officially in 1832 for the purpose of the army conquest. This line had an important role in the conquest during the Caucasian War and even as a reason for the beginning of the war.

When the first military outpost in Circassia was established in 1763 on the left bank of Terek River, Kabardians entered into negotiations with Russians and they sent their emissary Qeisin Qeitoqwe<sup>196</sup> to Saint Petersburg to protest the foundation of the fort. He presented a petition in which the limits of Kabardian Lands or Eastern Circassia as conceived by the inhabitants themselves were recorded: "The Kabardian lands extended, on one part, to the River Kuma and ruins of the ancient town of Madjar and on the part down the Terek River until the locality of Meken on the said river at least 60 versts down river from Mozdok" (Nolde, 1953: p. 344). Therefore, I think it was the first reaction of Circassian to a new phenomenon in the region and beginning of Circassian Question in the history of Caucasus. This act may be regarded as a flagrant contravention of article six of the treaty of Belgrade. By 1769, a line of fortifications was extended eastwards to Kizlyar, followed by a string of fortresses in the opposite direction that extended northwestwards to the Azov Sea, forming the so-called the Caucasian Military Line. The Line was completed in 1832, cutting off contact between the Circassians and Ottomans also along the Black Sea coast (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 59-60) (Map. 16-17).

### 2.6 Russo - Circassian War

The Russo-Circassian War as it is mentioned above refers to a series of battles from 1763 until 1864 in Circassia and it counts as western part of Caucasian War. I used the term Russo-Circassian War, its starting date as 1763, when the Russians began establishing forts, including at *Mozdok*, to be used as the primary frontier for conquest toward Circassia (Henze, 1992: p. 266) and settling down of Cossacks there. Additionally, I used the end of

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196. In Circassian: Къетыкъуэ Къесын



the war as the signing of loyalty oaths by Circassian leaders on 2 June 1864<sup>197</sup>. Afterward, the Ottoman Empire offered to refuge the Circassians that did not wish to accept the rule of a Christian monarch and Russian Empire, therefore many emigrated to Ottoman lands (Shenfield, 1999: pp. 149-162).

According to the pre-Soviet historians, this war hanged on for a long-term, almost for two hundred years. There are other historians, who are asserting that this war started sharply in 1817. It has come from A. A. *Gaspari*'s idea, who had first settled this point of view, in 1904. They tried to knit the beginning of *General Aleksey Petrovich Yermolov*'s military campaign to the Caucasus. The enormous plurality of the historians, however, came to the termination that 'The Russo-Caucasian War' started in 1763 and remained until 1864 (Natho, 2009: p. 267).

The war did not have a clear beginning. Instead of fighting slowly increased as more and more Russians moved south. From 1777, the Russians constructed a line of the fortresses from Mozdok to the northwest toward the Azov Sea. Before 1800 the main Russian push was on the Kabardians near the southeast end of this crosswise. The first castle emerged along the western Kuban river in 1778. During the Russo-Ottoman War (1787–92) the Russians made three attempts to take Anapa by crossing Circassian territory. The second effort was a tragedy when the Circassians harried the Russians going and coming. The Kuban Line took its fundamental figure in 1792-93. *Black Sea Cossacks*<sup>198</sup> were settled north of the lower *Kuban* in 1792/93 and *Don Cossacks* on the *Kuban* bend in 1794.

Actually, Russian pressure increased in the Caucasus after a relaxation of the European front with the signing of the *Treaty of Versailles* in 1763. Once *Catherine the Great* decided to invade the northeastern shores of the *Black Sea* in the 1760s, the Russian military worked to expel Circassians from the region bit-by-bit until they were surrounded in the high mountains (Richmond, 2013: p. 08). After the second war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1768, the Ottomans were forced to cede Crimea and the North Caucasus to Russia after the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774. In 1779, Empress Catherine instructed the Governor General of Astrakhan, Prince Potemkin, to pacify Kabardia by fair means or foul. After the Kabardian Army was defeated by Russian forces in 1779, Russian rule began to take root in Kabarda. The situation became worse when Russian troops occupied the *Kuban* in 1781 and *Crimea* in 1784 (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 61) (Map. 02).

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197. Some sources: 21 may

198. former Zaporozians

By 1801, the Russians reduced Georgia to a protectorate and formed a vice around the North Caucasus tribes, which sealed the fate of Circassians. Eventually, Russia increased its authority in the region, and in 1810 conducted a campaign in which many Circassians were killed, and approximately 200 Circassian villages were burned (Ibid: p. 62).

Not only Circassia, but also North Caucasus, and the entire Caucasus continued to be the arena of an acute contest between the Ottoman and Russian Empires for a long time. Because of this contest, the Circassians and other mountaineers became gradually cut off from the outside world, which has considerably deteriorated their situation. We should remember here that, as a part of this plan, Russia had masterfully cut off the eastern Circassia or '*Kabarda*' from the Western Circassia as early as in 1822 (King, 2008: p. 96).

The title of the great Prince of *Kabarda* was abolished in 1822, and Russian pressure in the region increased through 1825. During this time, many Kabardians immigrated to the western Caucasus and continued their war against Russian forces. Although Russian forces subjugated *Kabarda*, *Kabardians* searched for allies to continue their fight instead of accepting defeat.

From 1840, *Imam Shamil* tried to organize a unity among all Circassians in the North Caucasus. On one hand, he attacked Russian forces on the western front; on the other hand, he sent envoys to the *Kabardians* to organize unity in the region. However, effective cooperation between the two flanks of the North Caucasus was never obtained. The Russians were aware of Circassian indifference to Sufism and the disinclination of many of them to join forces with *Shamil* to organize unified attacks. Therefore, Russians lived in the luxury of being able to concentrate their attacks on one front without compromising their position on the other. The *Crimean War* of 1853–1856 created great hope for Circassians that Western powers, especially England, would intervene on their behalf and deliver them from the claws of Russia. The expectation reached its peak after the Russian defeat; however, at the negotiations, Russians managed to buy off the Ottomans and secure a free hand in the Northwest Caucasus. The fate of the North Caucasus was entrusted to the delicate care of Russians with the approval of the Western Powers. The only gain for Circassians from the Crimean War was that they were spared Russian aggression for three years, while Russia turned to vengeance on the Mountaineers, whose morale had reached its nadir (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 67). The flight from the Caucasus started during the 1820s on a small scale and

gained speed during the early 1860s. A campaign of *Russification*<sup>199</sup> and Christianization began in 1843 when the ‘Caucasus Spiritual Consistory’ was created in Stavropol and started to sever the cultural and religious ties of the region with the Ottomans (Richmond, 2013: p.139). Within the atmosphere of Russian pressure, Circassians had no chance to flee “to escape the forced sedentarization and Christianization<sup>200</sup> programs of Tsarist Russia” (Avagyan, 2004: p. 32). Immigration reached its peak during the mid-1860s after Russia issued a decree commanding Circassians to abandon their homelands. In 1859, after a bitter guerilla war that lasted thirty years, *Shamil* surrendered after the capture of the mountainous stronghold of Gunib<sup>201</sup> (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 67). After this cessation, Russian forces in *Chechnya* turned westward. In 1861, the western tribes of the Caucasus organized a national meeting in Sochi to construct a civilian administration to fight against Russian forces. The final pacification of the Northern Caucasus and the great exodus of locals came in 1864. Finally, Russia was able to crush eastern Circassians in 1859, and then the western Circassians in 1864 (Ibid: p. 66).

Generally, the *Russo - Circassian War* can be divided into two phases. The first phase of the Russo - Circassian War was the battle, which took place in Eastern Circassia, *Kabarda*. Only after the Eastern Circassia, was annexed, the war moved to the western part. The first battle between the Russians and the Kabardians happened near the Malka River in 1771, which eventuated by Russian victory. The bloodiest struggle was fought in 1779, and almost 50 princes and 350 nobles died. The *Kabardians* tried to find the protection of the *Porte* and attached against Russians during the *Russo-Ottoman wars* of 1787-1791, and 1806-1812. *General Yermolov*, the military commander of the southern Russian forces, arrived in the region in 1816. *Yermolov* requested that the mountainous Kabardians move in the plains to comfort their control. Then, the Caucasian military line was pushed further into the

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199. *Russification* (Russian: Русификация), or Russianization, is a form of cultural assimilation process during which non-Russian communities, voluntarily or not, give up their culture and language in favor of the Russian one. For more information, you can see: Weeks, Theodore R. (2004). *Russification: Word and Practice 1863–1914*. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society. 148 (4): 471–489. (Online access: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120523232533/http://www.amphilsoc.org/sites/default/files/480407.pdf>)

200. Christianization (or Christianisation) is the conversion of individuals to Christianity or the conversion of entire groups at once. Various strategies and techniques were employed in Christianization campaigns from Late Antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages in Russia.

201. In Russian: *Гуниб*, is a rural locality and the administrative center of Gunibsky District of the Republic of Dagestan, Russia.

Kabardian territory and many massacres were committed by the Russian forces (Ibid: pp. 60-63) (Map. 18).

### 2.6.1 Kabardian Role

The *Kabardians* established and created their first state in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in the center of the North Caucasus. This was only possible after the end of the Golden Horde, when a power vacancy was created by the failure of *Tokhtamysh*<sup>202</sup>, a descendant of *Genghis Khan*<sup>203</sup> and last khan of the *White Horde*<sup>204</sup>, at the hands of the mighty Tatar Tamerlane in 1395 by the Terek River. The *Kabardians* gradually reclaimed their lands in East Circassia beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Generally, the Kabardian resistance was localized and badly organized. The Circassian princes were unsuccessful to set up an allied front, and the Russians took the privilege of the internal contest. Despite their failure, the Kabardians were always looking for a foreign ally to uprise against the Russians (Kormezli, 2004: p.22).

Since *Ivan the Terrible* had married *Princess Gosheney*, Russia was inchmeal changing Kabarda and Kabardians unrecognizably and against their intention. She did that via the policy of divide and legislation; by setting the proud Kabardian princes against each other, by showering them with ‘the gratuities of the Sovereign’, by taking hostages from them to ensure their allegiance, and by giving to a pick few high positions in the Russian army, administration, and even in the imperial court (Natho, 2010: p. 718).

This time, the Kabardians organized the Eastern Circassia. By the XV century, the Kabardian princes had received so powerfully that they had expanded their effect and influence over all the neighboring regions. In fact, that was the main reason Ivan the Terrible had married the daughter of *Prince Temriuk Idarov* (Natho, 2009: p. 141).

The *Kabardians* maintained contacts with *Shamil* and the other Circassians. However, with the exception of the year 1846, it is not possible to mention about any armed stand of a significant dimension against Russians after *Yermolov* effectively crushed the organized Kabardian resistance. Russia was actually successful in its purposes to supply the security

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202. Tokhtamysh (died 1406), a prominent khan of the Blue Horde, briefly unified the White Horde and Blue Horde subdivisions of the Golden Horde into a single state. He descended from Genghis Khan's grandson, Tuqa-Timur.

203. 1st Khagan of the Mongol Empire

204. According to the *Tarikh-i Dost Sultan* written by *Ötemish Hajji* in *Khiva* in the 1550s, Batu's ulus was officially known as the White Horde under the category of ‘Wings of the Golden Horde’ after Genghis Khan's eldest son, *Jochi*.

of the *Georgian Military Road* and to prevent a North Caucasian league by controlling Kabarda. The main *Kabardian* role began during the Russo - Ottoman Wars of 1768-74 when the Ottoman army attacked the *Caucasus Military Line* in 1768 and *Kabardians*, who retained their might, attacked the town of *Kizlyar* and sacked it from Russians. After cessation of hostilities in 1774, the Ottomans ceded *Kabarda* and *Crimea* to Russia in the *Kuchuk Kaynarji Treaty*, despite that fact the Porte had no claim whatever over *Kabarda* (Hurewitz, 1975: pp. 92-101). The Russians pursued a policy of gradual annexation of northern Circassian lands by dislodging the indigenes and replacing them with the loyal Cossacks.

The position of the Kabardians became even more precarious when Russia occupied the *Kuban* in 1781 and annexed the *Crimea* in 1783. Plenty groups of Tatars, the formerly enemies, took asylum in Circassia, the Khans kept their titles. Sensing the threat posed by Russia, the Circassians and *Nogais* launched joint attacks on the Russians in the Western Caucasus in 1784, but no serious harm came out of these forays (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 60-63).

## **2.6.2 Consequences of Russian Conquest**

Russians employed a lethal combination of numerical superiority and systematic reduction of resistance in the forested foothills and mountains after coming to the North Caucasus. In this long war of attrition, the Circassians suffered heavy losses in terms of human life, as much as 800,000 dead, and their land was destroyed. Many tribes were wiped out, notably the *Ubykh*. After the end of the war, the Russians expelled the majority of Circassians to the Ottoman Empire by pursuing a policy of organized and systematic terror. Whole villages were plundered and then burnt down. Thousands of people were killed in cold blood. Those hideous acts, together with the conspiracy of the Ottomans, terminated in a large-scale exodus that irreparably compromised the demographic equilibrium in Circassia. It is approximated that more than a million people were forced to move and only 800,000 were eventually settled in the Ottoman Empire' territory. The difference being the victims of starvation, disease, shipping accidents, and the disordered Ottoman administrative system. Those who stayed in the homeland were obligated to resettle in the northern plains of the Caucasus (Map. 19).

In the reaction to continuous Circassian resistance and the defeat of their previous course of building fortresses, the Russian army began using a strategy of disproportionate punishment for ravages. With the purpose of impressive stability and authority beyond their

running line of control and over the Caucasus, Russian troops reprised by perishing villages or any place that resistance warriors were thought to fudge, moreover engaging the assassinations and hanging of warriors' families (King, 2008: pp. 47–49). Charles King, the historian, says in his book 'The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus' as one of the most important sources of this wars: "Understanding that the resistance was reliant on being fed by sympathetic villages, the Russian military also systematically destroyed crops and livestock. These tactics further enraged natives and intensify resistance to Russian rule. The Russians began to counter this by modifying the terrain, in both the environment and the demographics. They cleared forests by roads, destroyed native villages, and often settled new farming communities of Russians or pro-Russian Caucasian peoples. In this increasingly bloody situation, the wholesale destructionn became a standard action by the Russian army and Cossack units and was adopted by Circassians and other highland groups against Russian or pro-Russian villages" (Ibid: p. 74).

However, the Circassian resistance continued. The villages that had formerly avowed Russian rule were found uprising again, much to the rage of Russian admirals. As well as, the Circassian cause started to awaken sympathies in the West, especially Britain (Ibid: pp. 93-94).

*Dmitry Milyutin*<sup>205</sup> suggested as a first commander, the idea of Circassian exile and expulsions in 1857. *Miliutin* argued that the purpose was not to simply displace them so that their fields could be settled by productive farmers from other regions, that "eliminating the Circassians was to be an end in itself - to cleanse the land of hostile elements". Tsar Alexander II supported the idea and Milyutin later promoted as the minister of war in 1861 and from the early 1860s, exile began (Ibid: p. 94).

Till the end of the war, the *General Yevdokimov* was tasked with driving the remained Circassians out of the Caucasus, essentially into the Ottoman Empire. This attitude was imposed by moving columns of the Russian soldiers and Cossack troops (Levene, 2005: p.297). "In a series of sweeping military campaigns lasting from 1860 to 1864, the northwest Caucasus and the Black Sea coast were virtually emptied of Muslim villagers. Columns of the displaced were marched either to the Kuban plains or toward the coast for transport to

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205. Count *Dmitry Alekseyevich Milyutin* in Russian: *Дмитрий Алексеевич Милютин* (1816 – 1912), was Minister of War (1861–81) and the last Field Marshal of Imperial Russia (1898). He was responsible for sweeping military reforms that changed the face of the Russian army in the 1860s and 1870s.

the Ottoman Empire. One after another, entire Circassian tribal groups were dispersed, resettled, or killed” (King, 2008: pp.94–96). Such a strategy had been used for several years.

During the Russian imperial years, *Kabarda* was classified under the *Stavropol Province*. *Cossack* and *Russian* settlers found a new place in the northeastern parts of *Kabarda*. According to the Russian sources, there were about 70,000 *Kabardians* in *Kabarda* in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Chisholm, 1911: p. 619).

The once mighty *Kabardians* had been reduced to a subject people of Russia by the middle of the 19th century. Despite their defeat, the Kabardians were always on the lookout for an external ally to rise up against the occupiers. This expulsion, along with the actions of the Russian military in acquiring Circassia (Shenfield, 1999: p. 150), has given rise to a movement among descendants of the expelled ethnicities for international recognition that genocide was perpetrated. Some sources give us the number of hundreds of thousands died during the exile. Some historians use the course of 'Circassian massacres' for this Russian consequences in Circassia (Levene, 2005: p. 299, 302). At the same time then that Russian officials were congratulating each other on victory, lauding the glory of the Russian troops and the greatness of the Russian nation, many masses of refugees were still camping on the Black Sea coast, waiting for Ottoman ships to take them to the other part of the sea. Eyewitnesses described the shores as strewn with dead bodies. Shiploads upon shiploads of starving, half-naked Circassians, further weakened by infected illness and diseases, were getting the Ottoman lands. The following report provided by a Russian who worked in the army demonstrates the savagery of the campaign in which no quarter was asked or given:

“The war proceeded with inexorable and merciless severity. We pushed ahead one step at a time, but remorselessly, clearing every patch of land where a soldier set foot on mountaineers, down to the last man. The mountain *auls* were burned by the hundred. The snow had only just melted away, but it was before the trees had become clothed in their greenery (in February and March); the crops were eaten by the horses or even trampled down. If we managed to catch the inhabitants of the *auls* unawares, they were immediately led away under military escort to the shores of the Black Sea and then sent to Turkey. How many times did it happen that in the huts which had been hurriedly abandoned upon our approach we found warm gruel with a spoon in it on the table, clothing which was being repaired and with the needle still in it, and various children’s toys which looked as though they had been spread out on the floor next to a child. Sometimes very seldom, bestial atrocities were committed” (Baytugan, 1971: pp. 1-38).

Circassian historians quote the figures of near the four million marks, while official Russian figures are almost 300,000. The Russian statistics of 1897 records only 150,000 Circassians, one-tenth of the original number, remained after the war. Some Russian, Caucasian, and Western historians agree on the figure of approximately 500,000 residents of Circassia being deported by Russian by force in the 1860s. A large number of them died in transmission from the diseases and starving. Some of those that remained faithful to Russia were resettled into the plains, the left bank of the *Kuban River* (King, 2008: p. 96) (Table. 09).

### 2.6.3 British Connection

According to documents and travel notes, Circassia was very much attracted the interest of Britain since 1830s with the print of *Portfolio*, the *Vixen* affair and journeys of *David Urquhart*, *James Stanislaus Bell*, *John Longworth*, and *Edmund Spencer* to Circassia<sup>206</sup>. Definitely, British efforts to encourage and support resistance in the Caucasus were almost entirely outside the margin of conventional diplomacy. They were aimed to hold hopes of resistance alive, to annoy a potentially hostile, and to preserve options for more intense future action if international developments made it favorable and status favored it (Henze, 1990, p. 27). In the ground of the '*Eastern Question*', beyond supporting for Circassian resistance seemed a probate way for preventing Russian influence in the region. British attention included setting up a Circassian protectorate in order to achieve a base in the Balck Sea (Brock, 1956: p. 401-427; King, 2007: p. 238-255).

In contradiction to Russian negative representations, European powers like the British created a romantic vision of Circassians as noble knights, heroically fighting barbarian Russia<sup>207</sup>. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British government sent missions, amongst David

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206. These British adventurers wrote books about the Circassian resistance and their residences in Circassia, which are so valuable for the Circassian history, while we learn many details about Circassia of that time from these books, because of the lack of written literature among the Circassians. John Longworth, *A Year among Circassians (1837-38)* (Two volumes) (London, 1840); J. S. Bell, *Journal of a Residence in Circassia 1836, 1837, 1838* (Two volumes) (London, 1840); Edmund Spencer, *Travels in Circassia, Krim-Tartary, etc.* (Two volumes) (London, 1839); Captain Spencer, *Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea, and Circassia* (London, 1854).

207. See for more example: Bell, James: *Journal of a Residence in Circassia during the Years 1837, 1838, and 1839*, London 1840; Lapinski, Theophil: *Die Bergvölker des Kaukasus und ihr Freiheitskampf gegen die Russen*. Hamburg 1863.



*Urquhart*<sup>208</sup> would be the most popular one, to the region about trade opportunities. He arrived in Istanbul from Greece in 1831 and was employed by British Ambassador *Stratford Canning* as a confidential aide. He had been transformed into an ardent *Turcophile*<sup>209</sup> by the time he returned to England where in 1833 he published a book entitled ‘Turkey and its Resources’. This book so pleased *King William IV* that he sent it to all his ministers and urged his foreign minister, *Henry John Temple, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston*<sup>210</sup>, to make future use of the young activist author (Henze, 1990: p. 30). Actually, Near Eastern countries were providing a huge market for British goods. Not only the trade with the Ottoman Empire, but also the trade with Persia, the Caucasus, and even Russia was considered and evaluated in the foreign policy circles of Britain (Luxenburg, 1998: p. 142). On the other hand, it was obvious that British goods would not drive into the territories under the Russian rule as easy as it entered into a territory under the British influence (Gleason, 1950: p. 170).

By the end of 1837, *Russophobia*<sup>211</sup> was a major part of the English opinion, for which *David Urquhart* was mostly responsible. *David Urquhart*’s visit to Circassia in 1834 was important for the future British involvements in Circassia. He had a mission to research the resources of Ottomans, especially those which could be bought from *Anatolia* instead of Russia (Luxenburg, 1998: p. 92).

Encouraged by Lord Ponsonby, the new British Ambassador in Istanbul, Urquhart started a journey on the Black Sea. During his visit to *Samsun*, *Urquhart* met *Sefer Bey Zanuko*<sup>212</sup>

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208. David Urquhart was a Scot, an ardent Turcophil and an expert of the Near Eastern matters. After his visit to the Caucasus in 1834, he acted as an advocate and spokesperson of the Caucasians in the West. He was admired and backed by Sir Herbert Taylor, the King’s private secretary, and his writings greatly appreciated by the King William IV. He published the polemical journal *Portfolio*, and wrote several books about the importance of the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus, as well as the Russian threat against the British interests. Gleason, p. 146.

209. Turcophile (comparative more Turcophile, superlative most Turcophile) Favouring or sympathetic to Turkey.

210. He was a British statesman who served twice as Prime Minister in the mid-19th century. Palmerston dominated British foreign policy during the period 1830 to 1865, when Britain was at the height of her imperial power.

211. Anti-Russian sentiment or Russophobia is a diverse spectrum of negative feelings, dislikes, fears, aversion, derision and/or prejudice of Russia, Russians or Russian culture. A wide variety of mass culture clichés about Russia and Russians exists.

212. He was a Circassian nobleman and independence activist. He took part in the various stages of the Russo-Circassian War in both a military and a political capacity. Advocating for the cause of Circassian independence

(Figure. 11) who was at that time organizing “the illegal trade” between Anatolia and Circassia. It should be noted that the most prominent Circassian with whom Urquhart and all other Englishmen were in contact in *Constantinople* was *Sefer Bey* who had gone to Anatolia as representative of the confederated Circassian Princes to organize support for Circassian resistance during the Russo-Circassian Wars (Bell, 2007: Vol I, pp. 267-71). While *Urquhart* visited Circassia with reference letters of *Sefer Bey*, shortly after this meeting *Sefer Bey* went to Istanbul to get the support of the European powers for the Circassian cause. His residence in the British Embassy in Istanbul demonstrated his close relations with the British diplomatic circles<sup>213</sup>.

*Urquhart* visited Circassia where he received a petition signed by 11 chiefs requesting the British king to interfere in the conflict in 1834. Two more petitions confirmed in 1835 and 1836, both were reluctantly denied by the British ambassador in *Constantinople* *John Ponsonby, the first Viscount Ponsonby*<sup>214</sup>. *Lord Palmerston* had formerly blocked *Ponsonby's* initiative to involve Circassia in the Eastern Question, because of the weak state of the Circassian resistance movement. A series of diplomatic objection by the Russian ambassador conducted to *Zanuko's* deportation to Edirne. Encouraged by *Urquhart* a group of British adventurers unsuccessfully attempted to run the surround of the Circassian coast, the mission of the *Vixen* created a diplomatic scandal between Britain and Russia. Reinforced by *Ponsonby*, *Zanuko* continued to present appeals to the British albeit to no advantage (Köremezli, 2004: pp. 26-36) (Map. 20). He dispatched a British schooner that was filled with weapons lawlessly bound for Circassian resistance forces in 1836. Russian troops captured the ‘*Vixen*’ after it tried to run a naval surround and field its cargo on the Circassian coastline. The *Vixen Incident*<sup>215</sup>, the result of a lone diplomat’s unsupported wishing to help the Circassians, almost caused a war between Britain and Russia (Hopkirk, 2001: pp. 158-159).

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in the west and acting as an emissary of the Ottoman Empire in the region. By the end of his life, *Zanuko* had emerged as the leader of the Circassian independence movement.

213. You can see more details: “From Baron Wrangel to Baron Rosen, 16 [28] August 1835”, AKAK, Vol. VIII, p. 890; “From Baron Rosen to Graf Nesselrode, 31 October [12 November] 1835”, AKAK, Vol. VIII, pp. 891-892.

214. John Ponsonby, 1st Viscount Ponsonby, GCB (1770 – 22 February 1855) was a longtime British diplomat and politician.

215. In British history, named “The mission of the *Vixen*”

*Lord Ponsonby* wrote to the Foreign Ministry that it was time to support the Circassians, as he thought that the Circassian war was a part of the *Eastern Question* and the balance of powers (Luxenburg, 1998: p. 96). In one of his reports, Ponsonby stated that he had sent a message to Circassia about the establishment of a government and the announcement of an independence declaration (Ibid: p. 98). He also pointed out that the invasion of the Caucasus would yield more power to Russia than the suppression of Poland (Ibid: p. 100). However, the Foreign Ministry refused *Ponsonby's* claims on the necessity of rendering support to Circassia (Ibid: p. 101).

Besides the activities of *Sefer Bey*, another matter that bothered the Russian government was the British adventurers in the Caucasus. After the arrival of *James Bell* and *John Longworth*, *Raevskiy* also reported about the alleged British agents of, *Marrin* and *Iddo*, who came to Circassia with two ships full of arms. According to this report, *Captain Marrin* and the *Polish Polinsky* swore to return the Caucasus again with *Longworth*<sup>216</sup>. The fact that those adventurers were not prevented, if not encouraged, by the British government to act in Circassia promoted the belief in Russia that they were the agents of the British government. However, the British Government and the Foreign Office were very careful in their actions and attitudes towards Russia. Nonetheless, the anti-Russian circles in Britain, which also enjoyed the sympathy of King William IV, fostered the Russian anxiety that the British Foreign Office was intervening in Russia's internal matters. The British ambassadors in Istanbul also harbored similar views to those of the Russophobic society in Britain. Ponsonby and Stratford Canning enjoyed not only special influence and respect in Ottoman but at the same time, they had undeniable pro-Ottoman and anti-Russian tendencies (Temperley, 1964: pp. 74-75). They thought that the profits of Britain lied in the protection of the well-being of the Ottoman Empire, and the prevention of the future Russian expansion. In this context, the independence of Circassia was essential to prevent the Russian advance (Ibid: pp. 75-76). Actually, during this period, it seems that Ponsonby and Urquhart supported a more active policy for the protection of the Indian route. They believed that, if Circassia fell, then the Ottoman lands would come to the fore. Therefore, not only the Russian expansion should be prevented, but also a powerful Ottoman should be restored for the future benefits of Britain.

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216. You can see more details: Report from General-adjutant Lazarev to Baron Rosen, 24 November [6 December] 1837, AKAK, Vol. VIII; "From Golovin to Chernyshev", AKAK, Vol. IX, p. 453.

There is much still to be learned about foreign interest in, and involvement with, the Circassian resistance struggle. Ottoman archives should eventually broaden our understanding (Saray, 1988). Both Ottoman and British states were intended to keep hopes of resistance alive, harass a potential enemy, and preserve options for more vigorous future action if international developments made it desirable and circumstances favored it. Among Ottoman officials, there were plenty who encouraged what their compatriots were doing to help the Circassians. However, neither Palmerston uttered in a letter to *Lord John Russell* during the Crimean War are likely not far from those he held in the 1830s:

“To expel the Russians from the Danubian principalities and leave them in full strength would only be like turning a burglar out of your house, to break in again at more fitting opportunities. The best and most effectual security for the future peace of Europe would be the severance from Russia of some of the frontier territories acquired by her in later times, Georgia, Circassia, the Crimea, Bessarabia, Poland, and Finland... She could still remain an enormous Power, but far less advantageously posted for aggression on her neighbors”<sup>217</sup> (Bell, 1936: vol. II, p. 105).

Bell also restated how in 1837 a Circassian prince:

“... pointed out the sacred spot (as they justly esteem it) where Daud Bey [David Urquhart] had held (just three years ago in 1834) his meeting with the chieftains of this neighborhood, and first inspired them with the idea of combining themselves with the other inhabitants of the mountain provinces as a nation, under one government and standard” (Bell, vol. I, p. 166).

Urquhart had persuaded another Briton, James Stanislaus Bell, who had chartered the vessel as a merchant, to dispatch it contrary to the advice of *Ambassador Ponsonby*. Bell, ostensibly a merchant but whose interests also extended far beyond commerce, remained active in the Circassian cause until 1840. He stayed in Circassia for long periods during the years 1837-1839, accompanying the Circassians on raids behind the Russian lines and publishing in 1840 the most comprehensive first-hand account of the Circassian resistance struggle available (Henze, 1990: p. 32).

These unofficial British representatives and activities in Circassia were eager to persuade both the British public and the government that support for Circassian independence would be in the interest of commercial endeavor and British political ideals (Ibid: p. 33).

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217. Palmerston to Russell, 26 May 1854

Additionally, under a secret article, the Turks would close the Dardanelles to British and French warships while allowing Russian warships into the Mediterranean. This led to an anti-Russian agitation in England. *David Urquhart* went to Circassian land in 1834 and made contact with the rioters. Later in 1836, he was arrested in the *Vixen*. From 1837 to 1840 *James Stanislaus Bell*, *J. A Longworth* and *Edmond Spencer* of the Times were also in Circassia. All three published their memoirs. All have been arraigned for implying that they have more impression on the British that they had and offering the Circassians erroneous hope of British support that would probably not happen.

For example, on the entrance in Circassia, *Edmund Spencer* wrote:

“I was shown several copies of the Portfolio containing their declaration of independence, translated into Turkish, one of which every prince and noble carries about with him, whether he can read it or not, and regards with the same veneration as the Turks do the Quran. Whenever they sally forth on a warlike excursion, the national banner is carried at the head of the party, and at every general assembly, it is exhibited in some conspicuous place... This circumstance, alone, has given an accession of moral strength, and a confidence in the justness of their cause, with the certainty of ultimately triumphing, that the Russians will find extremely difficult to overcome, and renders the final issue of the contest more than doubtful, even should the Mountaineers be left to their own limited resources” (Spencer: vol. II, p. 265).

In November 1836 the Russian military brig, *Ajax* detained the British schooner *Vixen* in the seaport *Sudzhuk-Kale*<sup>218</sup>. The Polish immigrants also participated in the organization of the incident. The attendants received ground rule to go in *Sudzhuk-Kale* where meeting with a Russian cruiser was unavoidable. The owner of a schooner was recommended not to avoid it, but, on the contrary, to search for this meeting in every possible way (Henze, 2007).

The reaction in London to the possession was one of violation. The *Conservatives* brought up in parliament a question on the legitimacy of Circassia being under the jurisdiction of the Russian empire. After angry statements from London, *Nicholas I* ordered the army and navy into a status of raised battle readiness. The schooner, according to the instruction, was confiscated, and its crew was dispatched to *Constantinople*.

The Russian government was well aware that these British adventurers played a significant role in uniting the Circassians. However, this awareness caused exaggerations about the British involvements in the Caucasus to some extent. In Russia, there was some

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218. nowadays Novorossiysk

kind of xenophobia for the external involvements in its affairs. Russia's reactions to the British or Ottoman contacts with the Mountaineers of the Caucasus seemed to be a result of this mood. However, the uneasiness of the Russian government about the British involvements did not produce any important crises with the exception of the Vixen affair. According to *Luxenburg*, Russia was unwilling to turn the issue into an international matter and to solve its 'internal affair' by using its own means and methods (Luxenburg, 1998: pp. 108-109).

The conflict threatened to develop into a war between Russia and Britain, but by April 1837, relations had settled down. *Urquhart* was withdrawn to London. Britain was reluctant to antagonize Russia further, as it could not find a continental ally willing to lend support in a war. The crisis became one of the episodes of Russian-British competition in the 1830s - 1840s. After the invasion of Circassia, *Stratford Canning*<sup>219</sup> was the first one who had raised the *Circassian Question* for discussion in the *House of Lords* in June 1864, and Mr. H. *Seymour* had likewise raised the issue in the *House of Commons* in July. It was an issue that attracted British interest closely after three decades of their first involvements in Circassia (Henze, 2007).

Apart from the political concerns over the expansion of the Russian Empire, general public sympathy was also stimulated for the Circassians following numerous updates in the Press about their suffering. In 1862, this was added to by a Circassian delegation visiting the United Kingdom in the hope of gaining British assistance. They visited major cities up and down the country, including London, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Dundee, raising awareness of their plight among the British public. This had even led to public lobbying of government for the Circassian cause. Those people of Dundee who had received the Circassian delegation in a public meeting expressed a unanimous vote of sympathy for the people of Circassia (Figure. 12).

#### **2.6.4 Polish Connection**

The Polish Connection actually was a part of the 'Eastern Question' and therefore the roles of Poles should be considered into the analysis of the Russo - Circassian war. Probably, the most important point in Polish connection with Circassia was the 'November

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219. Viscount Stratford de Radcliffe

Uprising'<sup>220</sup> 1830-31, which the Poles were suppressed harshly by the Russians. Gradually after the fail of the uprising, thousands of Poles were sent to the battlefields in the Caucasus and many of them could flee and join to the Caucasian resistance, specifically in Circassian (Polovinkina, 1999: p. 140). In fact, for the Polish individuals' active in the Caucasus, the Russo - Circassian war served to distract Russian forces from the Polish independence movement on the Western fringes of the empire. Generally, the Poles were not indifferent to either the region or the struggle of the various tribes against the Russians. They considered them natural allies. It was believed that the battles in the region could bog down considerable powers in case of an armed revolt in Poland. On the other hand, more than 20 thousand Polish soldiers might have been in the service of the Imperial Russian Army in the Caucasus due to forced service following the 1830 Polish uprising. It was one of the reasons why *Prince Adam Czartoryski*<sup>221</sup> (Figure. 12) turned his consideration to the Caucasian mountaineers from 1834 onwards. He realized that the freedom fight of the Circassians and other peoples not only tired out and divided the Russian military forces but also strengthened the base of the exodus with the mass escape of the Polish forced recruits. That is why in 1835 a Polish delegation made a connection with the Circassians (Kukiel, 1955: p. 235; Köremezli, 2004: p. 39).

After the suppression of the Polish uprising in 1831, *Prince Adam Czartoryski*, a key supporter of the Great Emigration of Polish nationalists from the extinct Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the political and cultural centers of Paris, Istanbul, and London, the President of the National Government, dispatched the first Polish agents to meet with Circassian leadership in their alpine redoubts in the North Caucasus. That time thousands of Poles fled from Poland and even many of the Polish prisoners were sold as slaves to the Ottoman Empire's courts. The village Adampol<sup>222</sup> was established by those former slaves

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220. It also known as the Polish–Russian War 1830–31 or the Cadet Revolution was an armed rebellion in the heartland of partitioned Poland against the Russian Empire.

221. Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (Polish pronunciation: [ˈadam ˈjɛʐɨ ʧartɔˈriskʲi], Lithuanian: Adomas Jurgis Čartoriskis, also known as Adam George Czartoryski in English; 14 January 1770 – 15 July 1861) was a Polish nobleman, statesman and author. He was the son of Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski and Izabela Flemming.

222. Polonezköy or Adampol is a village, administratively a neighborhood, on the Asian side of Istanbul, about 30 km from the historic city Centre, within the boundaries of the Beykoz district. It was inspired and funded by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski and settled in 1842 by a small group of Polish emigrés, after the failed November Uprising.

with the help of the Ottoman government and the Polish Diaspora in Europe. Adampol extended and became populated by newcomers from the failed Revolution of 1848, the Crimean War in 1853, and by escapers from Siberia and from captivity in Circassia. The small village that was founded by the men who cherished the idea of an independent Poland was destined to play an interesting role in the struggle for the independence of Circassia (Skochen, 1998: pp. 55-59). In order to observe and evaluate the developments in Istanbul, the Polish immigrants there established the Eastern Agency (Kukiel, 1955: p. 245). According to Czartoryski, a war between Russia and the Great Powers of Europe was inevitable in the near future because of the Eastern Question. Hence, the Polish nationalists reinforced from a strong Ottoman Empire and an independent Circassia as a requisite for their aim of an independent Poland.

There was a constant flow of Polish soldiers escaping from the Russian army to join the Caucasus battles. However, soon the mountaineers also discovered that the Polish officers, especially those with engineering and gunnery skills, were able to contribute greatly to the improvement of the less-organized tribal troops; hence, they accepted their services. Moreover, the traitors of the army provided exceptionally valuable information about the position and reinforcements of the Russian army and the weak points of the fortress. (Köremezli, 2004: pp. 36-39; Temizkan, 2009: pp. 88-93). In 1836, Spencer wrote that hundreds of Poles were attending the war on the side of the Circassians (Spencer, 1837: pp. 417-418). Even the Ottomans themselves sent many Polish emigrants to Circassia (Brock, 1956: p. 450).

Since several former Polish soldiers had been sent by the Russian state to the Caucasus to serve under the Russian troops, there was some probability of organizing mass escapes and of inciting the Poles in the Caucasus. For this purpose, in 1835, a Polish mission was sent to the Caucasus, and links were established between Prince Czartoryski and the Circassian mountaineers (Kukiel, 1955: p. 236). This special bond with the Poles and the Circassians would continue to the very end of the Circassian war (Koremezli, 2004: pp. 36-39). On the other hand, Czartoryski was invested with the power to select and dispatch Polish officers to the East and was semi-officially recognized as the head of the Polish emigration and treated as the Sultan's ally (Kukiel, 1955: p. 281).



The new Polish Caucasus policy started in 1841 with the arrival of Michał Czajkowski<sup>223</sup> (Figure. 13). Emigrated after the suppression of the 1831 Polish uprising and joined Prince Adam Czarotorski's camp. It was planned that at the time of the outbreak of the Polish uprising, one part of the *Dobrujan*<sup>224</sup> Cossacks would have been pulled back to Podolia<sup>225</sup> and the other to the Caucasus to fight against the Russians (Prymak, 1982: pp. 28-31).

In 1843, the representatives of *Czarotorski* carried out successful discussions with *Imam Shamil* which resulted in the improvement of the conditions of the *Polish* war prisoners and deserters (MNK Czarotorskich Ew. 1257). There is a popular report from 1846 of a serious Circassian attack against a Russian fort led by a Polish officer, which terminated in the decoration of every surviving Russian soldier by the Russian Army. According to the Circassians, the Polish officer died due to the defeat (Ditson, 1850: p. 195). Another Polish agent tried to collect information about the situation in 1847. It was when the idea of sending military specialists of different fields to the Caucasian region to help the local troops was proposed (MNK Czarotorskich Ew. 1257; Temizkan, 2010, pp. 365-380).

According to Czajkowski, in May 1849, 12 thousand Circassian men attacked and captured the fort of *Sotcha Kale* under the command of *Shamil*. The death charge was one hundred, while the Russians lost 3700 lives, but there is an obvious exaggeration. Alongside, the Circassians seized 160 guns and multiple other outfits. *Czajkowski* considered that if the information was right, the Russians were obliged to send remarkable reinforcements to the region (MNK Czarotorskich 5426/IV. No. 17; and 5372. No. 72). From 1841 until 1852, the *Polish émigrés* were the only significant source of foreign support for the Circassian rebels (Lewak: p. 52).

*Klemens Przewłocki*, who was the main organizer of *Michał Czajkowski's* Polish Cossack Legion in the Crimean War<sup>226</sup>, was given control of the unit. *Przewłocki's* expedition to Circassia remained only a few months after which starvation and a lack of material support forced the Poles to pull back.

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223. Czajka Czajkowski (1804–1886) who also known in Turkey as Mehmet Sadyk Pasha (Turkish: Mehmet Sadık Paşa), was a Polish writer and political émigré of distant Cossack heritage who worked both for the resurrection of Poland and also for the reestablishment of a Cossack state.

224. Dobruja or Dobrudja is a historical region in Eastern Europe that has been divided since the 19th century between the territories of Bulgaria and Romania.

225. Podolia or Podilia is a historic region in Eastern Europe, located in the west-central and south-western parts of Ukraine and in northeastern Moldova.

226. The Sultan's Cossacks

After the Crimean war, the Polish troops were disbanded by the British government's orders and left to the goodwill of the Turks; some of them remained in the Turkish army – one regiment of the *Ottoman Cossacks*, and another of *Ottoman Dragoons*, a handful went to the Caucasus to join the Circassian insurgents, and some returned to France and Britain. Even in 1857, an armed expedition led by Colonel Teofil Lapiński<sup>227</sup> (Berzegov, 2008), which was managed solely by Polish émigrés, reached the beleaguered Circassians and fought a guerilla war at their side until 1860 (Połczyński, 2014). Actually, the Crimean war did not give the opportunity to the Polish nationalists to liberate their homeland from the Russian domination. The idea of independent Poland was also abandoned like the idea of an independent Circassia, and the Polish cause was left to its own destiny (Koremezli, 2004: pp. 71-73).

Finally, the Polish émigrés had on the Circassians' war for maintenance may not have been timeless in the domain, but the personal victim of warriors and the political influence averted by their Polish supporters abroad provided new lines of connection through which Circassians could forge relationships with the Western Powers. The result of these efforts was to keep the '*Polish Question*' alive amongst the Great Powers of Europe; the Circassians were not as prosperous (Połczyński, 2014).

## **2.7 Russian Policy toward Circassia in the 18-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

To figure out the Russian policy in Circassia, it is better to have the vision of Russian influences and relation to the Circassian elites, which was similar to the experience of other colonial states. The elites were to be co-opted into faithful servants. Nonetheless, by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian spread in the Caucasus turned into a transgressive confiscation of Circassian lands, with the dismissal of locals, harboring of the native defectors, and their conversion to *Orthodox Christianity*. Multiple petitions from elites for a compensation remained unsettled, and they chose the route of resistance against the Russians. In contrast to the other colonial experiences, the Russians began to protect the local commoners in their injustice against their land-owning elites. This policy of divide and rule along social lines kept throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. Shaken by its own trail of the

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227. Teofil Łapiński (1826 - 1886) - participant in the Hungarian uprising, commander with the rank of general of the sea expedition during the January Uprising in 1863.

*Pugachev's Rebellion*<sup>228</sup> and the *French Revolution*, the Russians chose to side with the local elites. Once more, the co-optation of the elites and nobilities, who were conferred with high military positions, and military support against their opponents, had become the main strategy of the Russian state. Rewards, palpable or symbolic, could at best secure the cooperation of the local elites and their communities. However, a more fundamental change in transforming the region into an essential part of the empire could be influenced by a long-term process of assimilation. This process gained specific importance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and later figured a base of ethnopolitics in the region (Khodarkovsky, 2008: pp. 2-6).

Historically, Russia had strongly arrived in the international arena, during the Peter the Great. This was the era of both the Ottoman Empire and Persia were attenuating and Russia was gaining stability. Circassia, due to its strategic importance, had become the asserting place for these regional and international powers. This situation, on the other hand, had noticed the consideration of some other European states, such as England and France. This situation had placed Circassia in the international sphere of the regional issues in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Natho, 2009: p. 268).

Russia was curved to gain Circassia and to build the essential ports on the Black Sea. Having accomplished that, Russia would capture Dardanelles and Bosphorus with the route to the Mediterranean Sea, deal a mighty blow on the business interests of Great Britain, weaken the situation of the Ottoman Empire, and gain the upper hand over the European powers in the competition for world advantage (Ibid: p. 268).

*Pogodin's* account to *Czar Alexander II*<sup>229</sup> plainly describes the position of Circassia in particular and of the Caucasus in general:

“The East must belong to us by right. We should not relax our activities in that direction for one moment. Constantinople has no knowledge of our real intentions. Having taken possession of it, we shall acquire the most important point of the world, and these gates to Asia should forever remain in our hands. Britain is the mistress of the seas since time immemorial. Leaning on the might we have achieved on land, we must have the same on the sea. We must take over the Black Sea coast, Bosphorus, and Dardanelles. The Black Sea ought to become the place for our maneuvers. Muslim ideas and the Muslim faith, which served

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228. Pugachev's Rebellion of 1773-75 was the principal revolt in a series of popular rebellions that took place in Russia after Catherine II seized power in 1762.

229. Alexander II in Russian: *Алекса́ндр II Никола́евич*, was the Emperor of Russia from the 2nd March 1855 until his assassination on 13 March 1881. He was also the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Finland.

for the basis of the existence of the peoples of many countries, are gradually collapsing and disintegrating. Old social institutions have become obsolete; their activities are not making any progress anymore. If taking advantage of them, we shall begin interfering in them; no European countermeasure will be effective. Our successes will be general and successive. Now we have the opportunity to influence the events in all the regions up to Constantinople itself. The compliance we displayed at the last meeting proved to be sufficient in order to disarm the opponent that is ready to oppose us furiously. Regardless of such a state of affairs, we have considerable work in store – building fortresses on the Black Sea coast, supplying all the strategic points with all kinds of armaments. It is imperative to complete the war with the peoples of the Caucasus, which will still demand substantial expenses and great perseverance. This war must serve for the acquisition of a fitting experience by our armies and become the screen of all our preparatory operations for the mastery on the Black Sea. Our pliancy on signing the Adrianople Treaty served the desired result. By it, we staved off the possible future interference of England” (Natho, 2009: p. 269).

## 2.8 Ottoman Policy toward Circassia in the 18-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Ottoman policy toward Circassia until mid of 18<sup>th</sup> century was similar to other internal regions of the empire. I mean mostly it was counted as demotic area until the *Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca* in 1774. Then the growing power of Russia and the threat of further losses convinced the Ottoman government of the need to strengthen its position in the North Caucasus, especially in Circassia. *Sultan Abdulhamid I*<sup>230</sup> decided to build a formal state structure in the Circassian territories and appointed *Ferah Ali Pasha* for governor of Sogucak in 1780. He was a good choice because of his Georgian origin. He developed a relevant program including several supplementary actions:

(a) Strengthening Ottoman positions militarily; (b) introducing regular administration in the Circassian territories; (c) encouraging the consolidation of orthodox Sunni Islam (Henze, 1996: p. 74).

*Avtorkhanov* and *Broxup* (1992: pp. 74-75) say that “with great energy, he set about renovating and extending fortified positions along the Black Sea coast, building a major new fort at *Anapa*. He facilitated the settlement of refugees from the Crimea along the coast. He persuaded the major Circassian tribes of the interior to submit to Ottoman authority and

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230. Abdül Hamid I, Abdul Hamid I or Abd Al-Hamid I was the 27th Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, reigning over the Ottoman Empire from 1773 to 1789.

mediation of disputes between them. He took measures to control piracy and began construction of a port at Gelincik. Although Ferah Ali Pasha died in 1785, his successors continued his program, and the Turkish hold on Circassia was substantially strengthened for the tests of strength that came in the early nineteenth century”.

Generally, the Ottoman Empire was anxious about the Russian advance and was sympathetic to the resistance in the Northern Caucasus. However, the Ottoman Empire would commit themselves to a struggle against Russia for the sake of the Circassians; therefore, their sympathies were not translated into a real alliance with the Northern Caucasians. As regards, the Ottoman Empire, which lost the Northern Black Sea coast from Anapa to St. Nicholas as a result of the *Edirne Treaty*, did not give up all its benefits there. The Circassians not only were to play important roles against Russia in the Crimean War and the 1877-78 War, but they would also continue to be potential leverage for the Ottoman Empire in a possible conflict between the Ottomans and the Russians as being sworn enemies of the Russian Empire (Köremezli, 2004: p.25).

While the rising of the menace from the North increased the strategic matter of the Caucasus for the Ottomans, the importance of the Ottoman Empire for the Mountaineers increased even more knowingly. However, its ineptitude to affect the Russian invasion in the Caucasus instantly, the Ottoman Empire could not implicate actively in the Circassian Question in this time. This, by no means, disagrees with the notion of the Ottoman Empire regarding the Russo-Circassian war. First, it was the place where the Circassian and Polish émigrés made plans and preparations and dealt diplomatic negotiations for the Russo - Circassian war. Moreover, the *Circassian-Ottoman* trade, the main financial and material source for the continuation of the war, never ceased until the final end of the war in Circassia.

It should be noted here that after the Circassian exile to Ottoman's lands, the Settlement Policies started. Actually, Ottoman state was able to cope with these demands relatively easily. However, when military conflict intensified, extended and became continuous, financial and physical limitations mounted. With the pouring of Muslim refugees and migrants into its territories, the Ottoman Empire became more and more religiously homogeneous. This produced a need for the transformation of the state's policies (Kale, 2014: p. 266) (Map. 21).



### 3 Chapter - Formation Factors of Circassian Question

#### 3.1 Introduction

As it mentioned in the previous chapter, historically the eviction of the Circassians from their historical homeland Circassia, in the consequences of the Caucasian War to the Ottoman Empire, was the onset point of a nation formation (Yemelianova, 2014: p. 03). The expulsion and eviction as the main result of Russo – Circassian War, was sent before the end of the war in 1864 and it was frequently supplemented by 1867. The Imperial Russian Army rounded up Circassian villagers, driving them to the ports of the Black Sea, where they awaited ships provided by the neighboring Ottoman Empire (Leitzinger, 2004). This historical process, I mean from the exile and then the settlement in new lands and making the Diasporic Community, have shaped the Circassian Question in the history of Caucasus. Actually, my research indicates that Circassians have also been subject to various exclusionary acts in the nation-building process, one of the best details and research of which are given in Kaya's work (2004).

From such a perspective, the Circassian Diaspora is an instance of exploring how boundaries of knowledge pertaining to identity, inclusion, exclusion, ethnicity, past and present are challenged, deconstructed, reclaimed and reconstructed within the processes of globalization. By means of these processes, Circassian activists and elites, since the exile, have challenged, changed and problematized the boundaries of knowledge to their identity, their rights, their history and their unity in general (Brandell, Carlson and Çetrez, 2015, pp. 145–146).

This chapter aims to explore how the Circassian Question is formatted and is changed by diasporic communities and Circassians from exile till nowadays which I want to call it 'Globalization Era'. It deals with how the Circassians redefine and transform the knowledge of their own identity, history and diasporic experience in the post-Soviet conjuncture. Therefore, I will survey the narratives of the Circassian activists as mechanisms of redefining Circassian identity and diasporic history. Actually, using the term of the Circassian Question is showed up in the process of a nation formation since 1864 as the main axis of their identity. From my point of view, the main factors of this formation are the Circassian Exile or better

to call it *Muhajir*<sup>231</sup> *Memory*, then lost the homeland in their new life and further, the first taste of independent in 1917 under the name of the *Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus*, role of Diaspora and their activities, rising nationalism and patriotism among elites and young generations, and finally transforming ethnic identity into national identity almost in two century.

I should draw the point that Circassians' ties with their homeland have increased markedly since the collapse of the USSR. Recent studies carried out in Turkey, however, demonstrate that a kind of structural exclusion with regard to equal access to political and cultural rights affects not only non-Muslims, *Kurds*, and *Alevis*<sup>232</sup>. The common belief in Turkey concerning the Circassians is that they are more privileged than other ethnic groups due to their religious affinity with Sunni Islam (Kaya, 2004). This belief may be correct to a certain extent, but there are not enough data to confirm it.

### 3.2 Circassian Exile – Muhajir Memory

For *Muhajir*<sup>233</sup> *Memory*, firstly I want to draw the attention of Russian invasion in Circassia since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As I mentioned in previous chapters, the earliest date of Russian expansion into Circassia was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, under *Ivan the Terrible*, who notably married a Kabardian wife *Maria Temryukovna*<sup>234</sup>, the daughter of Muslim prince *Temryuk* of *Kabarda* to secure and seal a contract of alliance with the Kabardians. After the death of *Ivan the Terrible*, Russian interest in the Caucasus quieted down; and then mostly focused on the *Crimean Khanate* and the *Nogai Horde*<sup>235</sup> (King, 2008) (Map. 22). However,

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231. *Muhajir* or *Mohajir* (Arabic: مهاجر muhājir; pl. مهاجرون muhājirūn) is an Arabic word meaning emigrant. In English, this term and its derivatives have been applied to a number of groups and individuals:

Muhacir (Turkish variant), Caucasian Muslims who immigrated to Anatolia, from the late 18th century until the end of the 20th century.

232. *Alevis* are followers of *Alevism* which is a syncretic, heterodox, and local tradition, whose adherents follow the mystical teachings of Ali, the Twelve Imams, and a descendant—the 13th century Alevi saint Haji Bektash Veli.

233. *Émigrés* in historical sources.

234. *Maria Temryukovna* in Russian: *Марія Темрюковна* (1544 – 1569) was a Circassian *Tsaritsa* of the Tsardom of Russia and second spouse to Ivan IV of Russia. Originally named *Qochenay bint Teymour*.

235. *Nogay Horde*, *Nohai Horde* or *Nogay Yortu* was a confederation of about eighteen Turkic and Mongol tribes that occupied the Pontic-Caspian steppe from about 1500 until they were pushed west by the Kalmyks and south by the Russians in the 17th century. The Mongol tribe called the *Manghits* constituted a core of the Nogay Horde.



in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Russia recaptured its imperial ambitions in Circassia, and expanded steadily southward, with the likely purpose of accessing the Middle East and Persia, using the Caucasus as a connection to the region (Wood, 2007). The first incursion and invasion of the Russian military into Circassia occurred approximately in 1763, as part of the *Russo-Persian War* (Map. 23).

In due term to a required need for the coastal area of Circassia and a sight that an independent Circassia would prevent their plot to expand into the southern lands, The Imperial Russian Army moved to attach Circassia. Tensions and pressures culminated in the demolishing the Russo - Circassian War, which in its later phases was outshined by the *Crimean War*. in spite of this fact that a similar war was going on the other side of the Caucasus, as well as the efforts of some Circassian princes to *Imam Shamil* and to Britain to connect the two battles, linking between the Circassians and their Eastern Caucasian counterparts were violated by the Ossetian alliance with Russians.

Animosities peaked in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and led directly to the Russo - Circassian War, in which its aim was fighting against the Russians to keep maintaining their independence. This armed conflict became entangled with the following the *Crimean War*, and at various times the Ottomans gave small assistance to the Circassian side. Moreover, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Circassians succeeded in securing the sympathies of London and even Poles, and in the later stages of the *Crimean War*, the British provided and supplied arms and intelligence support to the Circassians, who reciprocated by busying the Russians and returning with the intelligence of their own. But, this was not enough efforts to save the Circassians from the forthcoming break and Russian domination. Russia eventually harnessed the Circassians, tribe by tribe. While some tribes accepted Russian rule after being tightly conquered, others continued revolts, even though Circassia as a whole had surrendered (Narochnitskii, 1988: p. 280).

By 1860, some Circassians, primarily wealthy pro-Ottoman aristocrats, had immigrated to Ottoman lands in small numbers. The first large scale emigration was by the *Nogais*: in 1858-59, approximately 30,000 left the Northwest Caucasus for the Ottoman Empire (Kasumov, 1992: p. 151). In 1861, approximately 10,000 Kabardians voluntarily emigrated. At the same time, the Russians were driving the *Besleneis*<sup>236</sup>, *Temirgois*, *Kabardians* who

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236. The *Besleney* also known as Beslenei or Baslaney, are one of the twelve tribes (sub-ethnic groups) of the Circassian (Adyghe) people.

had wished to remain, and a portion of the *Abazins*<sup>237</sup> to the coast (Kumikov, 1994: pp. 10-11).

Some *Beslenei* families were moved in the left bank of the *Kuban* where they formed the base of the modern Circassian Republic of *Karachay-Cherkess* (Kasumov, Ibid: p. 150). By the following summer, 28 Cossack settlements had been built in place of the displaced Circassians. The *Natukhajs*<sup>238</sup> who had given up in January 1860, was ordered to return and settle in the northern Kuban. Cossack settlements began to appear on their territories, and the following year they were driven to the ports for exile. By the time of the deportation of the *Natukhajs*, 111 Cossack settlements had been already established (Richmond, 2008: p. 75; Polovinkina, 1999: pp. 157-58)

*Paul B. Henze* (1992: p. 111) has raised perhaps the most considerable perspective of the exile: “The great exodus was the first of the violent mass transfers of the population which this part of the world has suffered in modern times. Two generations later, tragedy began to overwhelm the Armenians of Eastern Anatolia. Millions of Armenians, Greeks, Turks, Kurds, and Nestorians were uprooted and hundreds of thousands died, at least during the commotion of the First World War and its aftermath. None of these ethnic disasters is entirely unrelated to the others”.

Approximately 1-1.5 million Circassians were killed, and upon order of the Tsar, and most of the Muslim population was deported mainly to the Ottoman Empire, causing the exile of another 1.5 million Circassians and others. This effectively annihilated or deported 90% of this nation. Circassians refugees were viewed as an expedient source for military recruits (Glenny, 2012) and were settled in restive areas of nationalist yearnings- Armenia, the Kurdish regions, the Arab regions and the Balkans (King, 2008: p. 97).

In the Balkan and Middle Eastern societies, they settled among considered them foreigners and tensions between the Circassians and the natives over land and resources occasionally led to bloodletting, with the impoverished Circassians sometimes raiding the natives (King, 2008; pp. 97-98).

After 1860, the number of Circassians exiled from their lands to the Ottoman Empire were increased rapidly. The Russian Tsar was anxious about the probability of the Ottoman

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237. The Abazin, Abazinians, or Abaza are a Caucasian ethnic group of the Northwest Caucasus, closely related to the Abkhaz and Circassian people.

238. The *Natukhai* are one of the twelve main Adyghe tribes. Their areas historically extended along the Black Sea coast from Anapa in the north to Tsemes Bay (now Novorossiysk) in the south and from the north side of the mountains to the lower Kuban River.

Empire would not accept any more Circassians. For that reason, the Tsar and his generals in the Caucasus send *Loris-Malikov*<sup>239</sup> (Figure. 14), an official who is responsible from Terek region to Istanbul for making an agreement with the Ottoman Empire. For his mission, *Loris-Melikov* made secret negotiations and agreements with the Ottoman Empire to ensure that in no condition the Circassians would be refused and returned to their lands (Kappeler, 2001: p. 301).

As a result of the displacing doctrine of the Circassians, most of the Circassians about 90 percent of the population at that time, were dismissed from their homeland in a short time period under terrible conditions, and a third of them perished during the exile from disease and starvation (Walter, 2008). In spite of all oppression, dispersion, and sufferings, the Circassians have survived and protected their identity during *Muhajir Memory*. Actually, *Muhajir Memory*, in my opinion, is their historical memory of this exile and their suffering from Russians.

### 3.3 Lost the Homeland

A homeland generally is the concept of the cultural geography with which an ethnic group holds a long history and a deep cultural association – the country in which a particular national identity began. A homeland can be referred to as a motherland, a fatherland, depending on the culture and language. In the term ‘*Lost the Homeland*’, I prefer it as a feeling of losing Circassian history, Circassian identity, and Circassian ethnicity when they left their homeland Circassia by force. As it is mentioned earlier, the Circassians formed many states throughout the time that were known, occasionally falling under brief control of the *Romans*, and later *Scythian* and *Sarmatian* groups, followed by Turkic groups including importantly *Khazars* and being a protectorate of the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, the Circassians, in general, have maintained a high level of autonomy even so far. Due to their Black Sea coast location, owning the important ports of *Anapa*, *Sochi*, and *Tuapse*<sup>240</sup>, they were heavily involved in the trade, and many early European slaves were Circassians. Therefore, from the beginning of the history for them, being under the domination of other neighbors was quite a praxis. Circassians have interchangeably used to live under feudalism,

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239. Count Mikhail Tarielovich Loris-Melikov I Russian: граф Михаил Тариелович Лорис-Меликов, Armenian: Միքայել Լորիս-Մելիքով; (1824 –1888) was a Russian-Armenian statesman, General of the Cavalry, and Adjutant General of H. I. M. Retinue.

240. *Tuapse* is a town in Krasnodar Krai, Russia, situated on the northeast shore of the Black Sea, south of Gelendzhik and north of Sochi.

tribal-based unions and monarchies to rule their lands, often incorporating local state. Circassia was organized by tribal system, with each tribe having a set territory, roughly functioning as greater than a province, but less than completely autonomous. Not all of the tribes within the confederation were ethnic Circassian: at different times, *Nogais*, *Ossetians*, *Balkars*, *Karachays*, *Ingush*, and even *Chechens* participated as members of the confederation (Usmanov, 1999). However, this experiment was cut short by the conquering of Circassia by Imperial Russia and the end of independence in favor of the rule of colonial Russia. With this introduction, I want to draw attention to the concept of the homeland in their background, which is really obvious in the process of building a nation and formatting an identity.

Mentally, when they lost their homeland after the Russian invasion of Circassia, they had to live in a new land with new regulations, which were not exactly coordinated with them. Therefore, as a diasporic community, they started new tribal format which was similar to their homeland. I think this heritage helped them to keep their identity and homeland memory.

One important issue for *Muhajirs Memory* to the Ottoman Empire was the idea of returning to the homeland. Many Circassians in the Ottoman Empire maintained ties between their places of origin and, when conditions allowed, frequently returned (Meyer, 2007: p.16). Historically, it seems that the first return demands started in large numbers in the early 1860s. Sometimes, these demands occurred just after months of immigration and sometimes after a span of several years. Frequently, *Muhajirs* applied to Russian consulates elsewhere to return or simply showed up at the Russian border requesting to return to Russia to live. Sometimes people returned because of the severity of conditions on Ottoman Lands, sometimes to work in the Caucasus after gaining an education within the Ottoman Empire, and sometimes for personal and financial matters. Besides Circassians, many people continued their ties with the homeland for years with short visits (Ibid: p. 21) (Map. 24).

Actually, '*Lost the homeland*' for the first time was highlighted in the term of Circassian Question around the early 1990s when Russian Caucasian republics with residual Circassian populations established ties to the diaspora and supported returnee programs. However, aside from a few thousand returnees the contact remained largely restricted to tourism by diaspora Circassians in the historic homeland. *Halbach* in his article (2014: p.03) says that "nor was a broader returnee movement to be expected, given that Circassian immigrants in many places have been relatively well integrated for several generations. The current exception is Syria, where the escalating civil war represents an acute threat to ethnic and confessional

minorities. Circassian organizations worldwide are now calling upon Russia, which in 1999 gave refuge to Circassian families from the war zone in Kosovo, to accept Syrian Circassian returnees. While several hundred have already arrived in *Maykop* and Nalchik, Moscow is generally wary of returnee movements of non-Russian nationalities in the North Caucasus. The Russian leadership has no interest in immigration increasing the Caucasian population in the region after most of the ethnic Russians left during the course of the past twenty years. The Ukraine crisis has heightened contradictions in Russian immigration policy. After annexing the Crimea, the Kremlin offered all citizens of the former Soviet Union Russian citizenship as long as they were able to speak Russian. The language restriction naturally excludes diaspora Circassians. At the same time, Russian-speakers from eastern Ukraine are currently being resettled in the North Caucasus, despite concerns about the security situation there”.

On the other hand, in Diasporic community, the civil society has become more effective in democratizing the public space in new lands, especially Turkey since the mid-2000s, including through the establishment of new Circassian organizations and Web sites. A similar process can be observed in the Russian Federation. Although restrictions imposed by the Putin administration still limit the growth of Circassian organizations. The revival of Circassian organizations in both Turkey and Russia has brought about a new division of labor in which newer organizations tend to specialize in politics and lobbying, whereas older organizations tend to prioritize cultural activities (Hansen, 2012: p. 111).

### 3.4 Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus

The *Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus* (MRNC)<sup>241</sup> was a short term government located in the Northern Caucasus from 1917 till 1920 (Figure. 15). It was broke away from the Russian Empire during the *February Revolution*, before the start of the *Russian Civil War*<sup>242</sup> (Map. 25).

MRNC included the lands of the former Terek Oblast and Dagestan Oblast, where now forms the republics of *Chechnya*, *Ingushetia*, *North Ossetia-Alan*, *Kabardin-Balka*, *Karachay-Cherkess*, *Dagestan* and some parts of *Stavropol Krai*. The total territory was

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241. Also known as the Mountain Republic or the Republic of the Mountaineers; Russian: Республика Союза Горцев Северного Кавказа, tr. Respublika Soyuz Gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza

242. The Russian Civil War (Nov 7, 1917 – Oct 25, 1922) was a multi-party war in the former Russian Empire immediately after the Russian Revolutions of 1917, as many factions vied to determine Russia's political future.

almost 260,000 square kilometers, with a population of around 6.5 million. Its capital was initially at *Vladikavkaz*<sup>243</sup>, then *Nazran*<sup>244</sup>, and finally *Temirkhanshura*<sup>245</sup>. For Circassians and even other ethnicities of Northern Caucasus, it was the first successful attempt for being independent and making their identity without Russian domination after some decades from Russian campaign in the Caucasus.

Shortly after the revolution in Russia, first the '*Union of the Peoples of the Northern Caucasus*' was settled in March 1917, and an *Executive Committee of the Union* was elected. *The Chairman of the Executive Committee* was *Tapa Tchemoeff*<sup>246</sup> who set as one of the leaders of the *National-Liberation movement of the Peoples of the Northern Caucasus*. Interestingly, the 'Central Committee of the Northern Caucasus' accepted the *Nizam of Imam Shamil*<sup>247</sup> on 5 August 1917. Then the republic officially established on 11 May 1918, after the collapse of the Russian Tsarist Empire. The main founders of the MRNC included *Said Shamil*<sup>248</sup>, *Tapa Tchemoeff*, *Sheikh Ali-Khaji Akusha*, and *Haidar Bamat*.

The *Mountainous Republic* was *de jure*<sup>249</sup> accredited and recognized by the *Ottoman Empire*, *Germany*, the *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic*, *Bulgaria*, *Great Britain*, *Austria-Hungary*, the *Kuban People's Republic*, and the *Democratic Republic of Georgia* (Kathleen, 2009).

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243. Vladikavkaz, formerly known as Ordzhonikidze and Dzauzhikau, is the capital city of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Russia.

244. Nazran is a town in the Republic of Ingushetia, Russia. It served as the republic's capital in 1991–2000, until it was replaced with Magas, which was specially built for this purpose.

245. Buynaksk is a town in the Republic of Dagestan, Russia, located at the foothills of the Greater Caucasus on the Shura-Ozen River, 40 kilometers southwest of the republic's capital Makhachkala.

246. Abdul Tapa Medjid Bey Ortsa Tchemoeff (1882 - 1937) was the only Prime Minister of the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus. He was in office from May 11, 1918 until the entire government was forced into exile by the advancing Bolsheviks in 1921. His official title was General Tchemoeff, Prime Minister of the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus.

247. Constitution of Shamil of 1847 based on Sharia.

248. grandson of Imam Shamil, who in 1924 would become a founder and leader of the "Committee of Independence of the Caucasus" in Germany

249. means a state of affairs that is in accordance with law

During the Russian Civil War, the Mountaineers were involved in furious clashes against the attacking the White Army<sup>250</sup> of *General Anton Denikin*<sup>251</sup> (Figure. 16). The struggle ended when *Denikin's army* was entirely vanquished by the 11<sup>th</sup> *Red Army*<sup>252</sup> in January 1920. The advancing Red Army was at first greeted with red flags in the villages of the Northern Caucasus, but the promises of an autonomous rule made by the Bolsheviks<sup>253</sup> went unrealized (Urushadze, 2005: pp. 72-87).

Finally, the *MRNC* was occupied by the *Red Army of Bolshevik Russia* and the Government of the Republic was obliged to leave the Caucasus in June 1920. New system transformed previous territory into the *Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic*<sup>254</sup> in January 1921 (Marshall, 2010) (Map. 26). I think this short life of *MRNC* was a struggle to keep alive the Circassian Question regarding *Muhajir Memory* and *Lost the Homeland*.

### 3.5 Diaspora

The Circassians were sometimes seen as military fighters in the regional armies and sometimes as nomads in provincial communities when they became *Muhajir community*. This same divide, as with many other instances, continues in the Republican phase. For Circassians in Turkey (Map. 27), their contribution to the *War of Independence*<sup>255</sup> alongside

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250. also known as the White Guard, the White Guardsmen or simply the Whites, was a loose confederation of Anti-Communist forces that fought the Bolsheviks, also known as the Reds, in the Russian Civil War (1917–1922/3) and, to a lesser extent, continued operating as militarized associations both outside and within Russian borders until roughly the Second World War.

251. Anton Ivanovich Denikin was a Russian Lieutenant General in the Imperial Russian Army and afterwards a leading general of the White movement in the Russian Civil War.

252. The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army was the army and the air force of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, and, after 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The army was established immediately after the 1917 October Revolution.

253. The Bolsheviks, originally also Bolsheviks or *Bolsheviki*, were a faction of the Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, which split apart from the Menshevik faction at the Second Party Congress in 1903.

254. The Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic or Mountain ASSR was a short-lived autonomous republic within the Russian SFSR in the Northern Caucasus that existed from January 20, 1921 to July 7, 1924.

255. The Turkish War of Independence (19 May 1919 – 24 July 1923) was fought between the Turkish National Movement and the proxies of the Allies – namely Greece on the Western front, Armenia on the Eastern, France on the Southern and with them, the United Kingdom and Italy in Constantinople (now Istanbul) – after parts of the Ottoman Empire were occupied and partitioned following the Ottomans' defeat in World War I. Few of the occupying British, French, and Italian troops had been deployed or engaged in combat.

the *Kemalist*<sup>256</sup> elite (Mango, 1999: pp. 157–85), and *Çerkes Ethem*'s<sup>257</sup> affair (Bozkurt, 2011), as well as the revolt of *Ahmet Anzavur*<sup>258</sup> (Zurcher, 1993: p. 159), constitute the turning points which have been constantly narrated in both Turkish and Circassian perspectives of Turkish history. Later, with the creation of the Republic and to protect its solidarity, the new regime took some precautions to create the Circassian rebellions, as well as other ethnic rebellions, such as the *Sheikh Said* rebellion<sup>259</sup> in the eastern provinces (Van Bruinessen, 1978). This was recognized as a major issue that needed to be solved. During the first years of the Republic, many suspected they could never be integrated into the new Turkish society. However, the fact that Circassians were Sunni Muslims, and there were elite officers and officials who were loyal helped to mitigate accusations of being *unfaithful* to the state, particularly in comparison to *Alevi*, *Kurds*, or *Arabs*. Even their population all this time was different (Table. 10).

After the exile during the formation of '*Muhajir Memory*' and the feeling of '*Lost the Homeland*' in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Circassians became a part of the political machine and the Ottoman elite: engaged within the armed forces and the state, the

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256. Who were followers of *Kemalism*, also known as *Atatürkism* (Turkish: *Atatürkçülük*, *Atatürkçü düşünce*), or the Six Arrows, which is the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey. Kemalism, as it was implemented by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was defined by sweeping political, social, cultural and religious reforms designed to separate the new Turkish state from its Ottoman predecessor and embrace a Westernized way of living, including the establishment of democracy, secularism, state support of the sciences and free education, many of which were first introduced to Turkey during Atatürk's presidency in his reforms.

257. *Çerkes Ethem* (1886 – 1948) was a Turkish militia leader of Circassian origin who initially gained fame for fighting against the Allied powers invading Anatolia in the aftermath of World War I and afterwards during the Turkish War of Independence.

258. The Revolt of Ahmet Anzavur was in fact a series of revolts led by the Ottoman gendarme officer Ahmet Anzavur against the Turkish national movement during the Turkish War of Independence. The revolt was coordinated by the British secret service and the monarchist Ottoman government against the republican Turkish nationalist forces. The forces under Anzavur's command were made up of various ethnic groups with the bulk of the forces (including Anzavur) belonging to the Circassian ethnicity. The "revolt" occurred October 1, 1919 to November 25, 1920 and occurred in the regions of Biga, Bandırma, Karacabey, and Kirmastı. Despite some difficulty, the revolts were decisively put down by the nationalist forces.

259. The Sheikh Said Rebellion or Genç Incident was a Kurdish rebellion aimed at reviving the Islamic caliphate and sultanate. It used elements of Kurdish nationalism to recruit.



Circassians' relationships with their homeland were also seen as a potential route for the propaganda of *Pan-Islamist*<sup>260</sup> thought in Russia (Avagyan, 2004: p. 98).

Within the Circassian community specifically in Ottoman lands, courageous and privileged positions on one hand and notorious positions, on the other hand, relate to Circassian relations with the indigenous communities and the state structure of the new state. Examination of these relationships is important to understand Circassian Diasporic Community in Turkey in particular and diasporic communities in general, but also the ways the Turkish state considers other ethnic groups in Turkey (Yeğen, 2004: p.66).

As the Second Constitutional Period (1908) pointed to the formation of a public scope in the Ottoman Empire in general, it led to the emergence of Circassian organizations and publications in particular. The Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association<sup>261</sup>, established in 1908, declared its aims to be informing Circassians culturally, supporting trade among Circassians and providing the land to be harvested, in addition to serving in the protection of the constitutional regime (Aksoy, 2003: pp. 100-101). In 1911, the association published the first Circassian newspaper '*Ğuaze*', in Turkish and Circassian, which was published weekly and consisted of eight pages. It also established the first Circassian school, '*Özel Çerkes Örnek Okulu*', in Istanbul within which there were courses on Circassian history and geography, language and literature, art, and music (Aydemir, 1991: p. 123). The schools and educational activities of Circassians in the Ottoman era remained unique instances: in the new republic, there was to be no publicly used Circassian school, textbook or course until the 2000s<sup>262</sup>.

In 1910, another organization, the Immigrants Commission<sup>263</sup>, was established. The Commission originally dealt with cultural and social activities such as producing alphabets, and elementary books for reading and writing, and searching the settlements of North Caucasian tribes (Avagyan, 2004: p.132). In 1914, another organization called the *North Caucasian Association*<sup>264</sup>, was established and stated its aims to be defending and protecting

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260. They are the followers of Pan-Islamism idea, which is a political movement advocating the unity of Muslims under one Islamic state – often a Caliphate – or an international organization with Islamic principles.

261. Çerkes İttihat ve Teavün Cemiyeti

262. Starting from the 1990s, during the 2000s the Turkish state initiated certain policies regarding ethnic groups and the issue of EU membership enlarged the space within which non-Turkish ethnic groups in Turkey are able to express themselves.

263. Muhacir Komisyonu

264. Şimali Kafkasya Cemiyet-i Siyasiyesi

the national rights of the groups of the North Caucasus, establishing national solidarity and cooperation among these groups, developing the national character, developing sciences and applied sciences and especially national education, encouraging art and trade, protecting orphans and families in need of help, increasing the national population by struggling with diseases, and protecting the purity of the line (Turan, 1998: p. 243).

The new organization named *Circassian Women's Mutual Aid Society*<sup>265</sup> was set up in 1918. Between 1920 and 1923, this organization published the magazine '*Diyane*', which means '*Our Mother*' in Circassian. *Diyane* stated his aims for calling the young people to research the national presence in history, language, literature, music, and social life and to develop this presence (Tuna, 2004: p. 5). In 1922-23, the society was involved in integrating the North Caucasians who took refuge mainly in Istanbul during the *Russian Civil War* (Bezaniş, 1994: p.63).

The researcher, *Setenay Nil Dogan* (2015: p.148) believes that “throughout the period between the second half of the nineteenth century and 1920, relations between the Ottoman state and the Circassians were mostly harmonious. Circassians were well accepted in government institutions such as the palace, the bureaucracy, and the military since the Ottoman state’s foreign policy which identified Czarist Russia as an expansionist force that was threatening the Ottoman lands was in harmony with Circassian interests in the Caucasus. Hence, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with extensive participation in state institutions, the Circassian identity was embedded in Ottoman identity. However, the alliance and the harmony of Circassians with the political system were about to change in the 1920s with the transformation from the multi-national, multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire to the nation-state. The end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey meant the end of the fellowship on which Circassian-Turkish relations were based”.

*Dogan* (2015: p.148) continues with this quotes about the role of Circassian in Turkish War of Independent: “Developments during the Turkish War of Independence constituted the turning point for the Circassians. During the war, two Circassian groups became visible; those who were in favor of Independence and who later became leading figures in the establishment of the *Republic of Turkey*, such as *Ali Fuat Cebesoy*<sup>266</sup>, *Rauf Orbay*<sup>267</sup>, *Yusuf*

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265. Çerkes Kadınları Teavün Cemiyeti

266. Ali Fuat Cebesoy (1882-1968) was a Turkish army officer and politician.

267. Hüseyin Rauf Orbay (1881-1964) was an Ottoman-born Turkish naval officer, statesman and diplomat.

*İzzet Paşa*<sup>268</sup>, *Bekir Sami*<sup>269</sup>, etc.; and those who, with their loyalty to the Caliphate and the Sultan, were against the government in Ankara, such as Ahmet Anzavur<sup>270</sup> who, interestingly enough, was crushed by yet another Circassian, Çerkes Ethem, the militia leader during the early years of the war”.

However, *Dogan* (2015: p.148) believes that two developments took place towards the end of the war, could form the future of the Circassians’ role. The first one, the formation of a regular army, *Çerkes Ethem* who were faced to the War of Independence and therefore the new nation-state. The second one was a small group of Circassians from the *Marmara* area who in 1921 built the organization of *Şark-ı Karip Çerkesleri Temin-i Hukuk Cemiyeti*, in Izmir. They agreed that the final source of extermination for the Circassians had been the *Turkification*<sup>271</sup> course of the Committee of Union and Progress (Tunaya, 1952: pp. 606-614.). The organization later declared its faithfulness to the Greek forces.

In the 1950s, the Circassians created new institutions and published several journals such as *Kafkasya*, *Marje*, *Nart*, *Yazıları*, *Kafkasya*, and *Kamçı*, which got unbeatable sites of communication. They appeared under the mask of *North Caucasian Turks* till the 1960s and organized by anti-communism on their ethnic identity (Bezaniş, 1994: p.141).

From the 60s, the discourse of the diasporic activists moved into the idea of Caucasian heritage reengagement (Ibid). The military regime of 1980 closed down all ethnic organization and examined those representing non-Turkish culture (Toumarkine 2000: p. 405). Nevertheless, the Circassian organizations had been opened and started their activities by 1984 (Brandell, Carlson & Cetrez, 2015: pp. 147-150). The Circassian diaspora has achieved scope and popularity since the '90s that have become accessible via the procedure of globalization and the post-Soviet era. Therefore, rather than being taken for supposed, the diasporic identity in Turkey is a phenomenon that should be sought in the term of ethnocentrism.

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268. Yusuf İzzet Pasha (1876-1922 in Ankara) was a general of the Ottoman Army and the Turkish Army.

269. Bekir Sami Kunduh (1867-1933) was a Turkish politician of Ossetian origin. He served as the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. He was in office during 1920–1921.

270. Ahmet Anzavur (1885-1921) was a gendarme officer in the Ottoman Empire. He was of Circassian descent. Anzavur served as a major during World War I. He became a guerrilla leader in Anatolia, who coordinated what is known as Revolt of Ahmet Anzavur during Turkish War of Independence.

271. Turkification, or Turkicization, is a cultural shift whereby populations or states adopted a historical Turkic culture, such as in the Ottoman Empire.

*Dogan* (Ibid: p.150) gives the interesting point on the post-Soviet era such as: “The meanings and effects of the post-Soviet conjuncture, namely the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, have been twofold for the Circassian community in Turkey. On the one hand, with the politics of the 1990s, the geography and peoples of the diasporic homeland have become accessible to the Circassian diaspora. Though there were some instances and memories of communication with the Caucasus, which had continued during the turbulent 19<sup>th</sup> century and intensified in the 1960s as a result of the return movement that argued for the necessity of returning to the homeland, for most of the Cold War era there were almost no actual and systematic relationships with the homeland. In the 1990s, the chaotic, haphazard and unexpected encounters with the diasporic homeland in the Cold War era were replaced by direct access to the homeland and regular relations and visits”. In Turkey, the *Kaf-Der*<sup>272</sup>, which was established in 1993 worked as an umbrella organization, constituted the largest Circassian civil network until 2004 when it was exchanged by a bigger institute in the name of *KAFFED*<sup>273</sup>. On the other hand, the drop of the Soviet Union has influenced the Circassian activist groups in Turkey and changed into the discourses with regard to identity, culture, homeland, and nationality (Shami, 1998: p.643), this phenomenon caused the Circassian NGO’s gather under some umbrellas.

The first of this kind of umbrella gathering was the *International Circassian Congress* which was held in Nalchik in May 1991. It built up the *International Circassian Association* (ICA), whose elected members display the Circassian societies in the three Circassian republics and the diasporic communities. They carried many formations from Turkey, Russia, and other countries, containing Circassian councils<sup>274</sup> of the three republics, the Middle East, California, and New Jersey, some charities from Turkey, and a *Circassian Cultural Association*<sup>275</sup> from Germany. *Halbach* (2014: p.03) says in this regards: “The ICA has, however, not pursued that goal with great vigor. Its offices are staffed largely with members of the bureaucratic elites of the three Caucasian republics, who were concerned to avoid confrontation with Moscow and practically failed to respond to Russian repression against activists who raised the *Circassian Question* in connection with Sochi 2014. Such activists increasingly organize in small autonomous groups outside the ICA, which also

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272. Caucasian Association

273. Federation of Caucasian Associations of Turkey

274. Adyghe khase

275. Tscher-kessische Kulturverein

missed the transition to the internet age and for a long time did not even have its own website”.

In spite of the primary honor about the homeland, and repatriation, putting these ideas into the application has shown to be challenging for the Circassians situation in Turkey. Therefore, in the 90s the Circassian diaspora in Turkey and the middle east passed a transformation on three interconnected phases. The first phase deals with their homeland: post-Soviet era and relations with the homeland have become different from relations during the Soviet. The second step is relevant to their born community: Circassians’ relations with the Turkish and Middle Eastern states and the Circassians situation in terms of ethnicity and citizenship have been important. The third level is the transformations on the community level and concerns the transformations of the Circassian community’s constructions of its past and future in line with these developments (Brandell, Carlson & Cetrez, 2015: pp.150-152).

Therefore, I can sum up that since the 1990s; Circassian activists in Turkey have appropriated multiple roles in the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish nation-state through the themes of the break and the silence. A reconstructed past based on the themes of the silence and the break transforms the Circassians in Turkey from being a group with no actual historical or geographical links to the homeland, other diasporic communities or the host country into a historical entity which has relationships with the homeland, transnational networks, and the host community.

As the Circassian diaspora is now linked to the homeland and other diasporic communities politically, economically and culturally through touristic travel, conferences, social and political organizations, cyberspace, etc., the narratives on the break and the silence also locate Circassians in the history of the host community and state. Voicing and unveiling the break and the silence becomes a diasporic strategy not only to claim agency for Circassians in the Ottoman Empire and the Republican era but also to redefine Circassian identity and diasporic history. Since the 1990s, the Circassians in Turkey have become a diasporic group with a history and a voice to talk about it, and the diasporic voice changes and reconstructs the boundaries of knowledge about Circassian society, history and identity (Brandell, Carlson & Cetrez, Ibid: pp.158-159).

Nowadays the central Circassian demand is recognition of the Russian Empire’s crimes against their ancestors. Some leaders and organizations insist Moscow should acknowledge the mass deportations of Circassians as genocide. Others consider a softer formulation would suffice but insist injustices be publicly acknowledged (Epifantsev, 2009). The issue gained

new prominence in 2007 when Sochi was awarded the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. *Krasnaya Polyana*, the opening ceremony place, was formerly the final battle position and the military parade of the Russian victory in 1864. As part of its strategy to build closer ties with the North Caucasus, Georgia in 2011 became the first state to recognize a Circassian genocide (International Crisis Group, 2011: p. 9). Actually, the case of the Sochi Olympics was one of the last role of the diaspora in the Circassian Question (Sufian, 2009). Therefore, in the modern era of Circassian activist and diaspora, it becomes a rallying point to focus on the Circassian Question.

Other claims are also linked to historical injustices, including a program to repatriate Circassians from the diaspora. A 1999 federal law stipulates that “indigenous peoples of Russia” can obtain citizenship by a simplified procedure<sup>276</sup>. 200 people resettled from Kosovo to Adyghea in 1999. Repatriation of Syrian Circassians is under discussion between the Circassian movement and Russian authorities since December 2011. On 11 February 2012, around 1,000 activists meeting in Adyghea’s capital, Maykop, proposed adjustments to Russian immigration laws to permit fast repatriation. Some 300 people had moved to Kabardin-Balkar and 100 to Adyghea by August, but so far, Syrian Circassians do not seem interested in mass migration (Caucasian Knot, 2012).

### **3.6 Nationalism and Patriotism**

The Circassian nationalism and patriotism is the ideal willing among Circassian elites to build or better to say to reestablish an independent Circassian state in the North Caucasus, which never shaped again after the Russo - Circassian War. This desire can be related in *Muhajir Memory* and *Lost the Homeland*. Many of its themes include the consideration of diaspora and the revivification of the Circassian language (Tlisova, 2009).

After the failure of the Soviet Union with much more data, the nationalism more than patriotism has been becoming increasingly popular among the young generation in the diaspora, and to a lesser scope, older ones (Tlis, 2009). It is doubtful by some researchers that the current Republican states have any members with patriotism agendas. In fact, Circassian nationalism is first the ideology of activist groups in Circassian republics of Russia, as well as Diaspora. The survey on nationalism since it is important because of its influences on forming and shaping the nation mentally and identity.

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276. Federal law no. 99-F3, “On the policy of the Russian Federation in relation to compatriots abroad”, 24 May 1999

Besleney (2010) the researcher of The School of Slavonic Studies, University College London, believes: “Both *Adyge Khase*<sup>277</sup> and the International Circassian Organization have declared that their aim is to protect the rights of the Circassians wherever they live and to facilitate the return of the substantial portion of the Circassian Diaspora to the Circassian inhabited lands of the Northwest Caucasus to change the demographic structure”.

Trying to get recognition of the 'Circassian genocide' is a very leading phenomenon and an important move among Circassians, though it is not presently nationalist. Another significant movement often is more nationalistic and emphasis to build a 'Historic Circassia', as the core of Circassian nationalism and patriotism, with the image of historical territories, and make Circassian as one ethnic-nation group on the internal and external census. There is a feeling among some Circassians that It was Russian strategy to identify them as some different notions of Kabardian, Adyghean, Cherkessian, and Shapsugian. Many politicians even warn that if this is not removed, that outage will eventually lead to the death of the Circassian notion (Goble, 2009). On the other hand, many Circassians do not approve withdrawing from Russia or even Russians (Ksalova, 2010), taking instead that an allied Circassia still within Russia is a good option (Goble, 2010). Nevertheless, most claim that this unifying within Russia should have only one official language, in the name of Circassian. The goal to break Karachay-Cherkess and Kabardin-Balkar has won itself the official backing of many Circassians, especially in Karachay-Cherkess, as well as the influential Circassian organization 'Adyge Xabse' (Table. 11).

Zhemukhov (2012: p.504) believes that “while composing a common ethnic community, the Circassians did not represent a unified nation in the modern use of the term, either at the time of Russian conquest or during the Soviet ethnic territorial delimitation. Most of the Circassians were deported in the middle of the nineteenth century, after the Caucasian war. Circassian lands were divided, during Stalin’s experiment on nationalities, into several small administrative units of different status. These areas did not adjoin each other, and Circassian populations were grouped together with unrelated nations”.

After the crisis involving the ethnic identity, a group of young Circassians, led by *Aslan Zhukov*<sup>278</sup>, reimaged the Mount Elbrus in a symbolic sign for Circassia (Caucasian Knot,

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277. Literarily means Circassian Parliament, which was a legislative institution presented in most Circassian principalities before the Russian conquer. Nowadays, it is a common title for many Circassian NGOs in Russia and diaspora communities. The Parliament of Adyghea Republic is called Xabse, as well.

278. Aslan Zhukov, 36-year-old founder of Adyge Djegu, another major Circassian nationalist organization.

2015). Soon *Aalan* was murdered on 14 March 2010 by a bullet in a dark alley and his death spurred another round of revolting among Circassians, who diversely ascribe his loss to the state of the republic, the Russian government, the Russians in the republic or in Karachay, some mixture, or all four. The leader of the Republic told that his death should not be pointed in ethnic terms, but this resulted from him to be in the list of possible culprits from the Circassian point of view (Dzutsati, 2010).

The Circassian diaspora in the Middle East nowadays are tolerating a cultural reawaken via nationalism, as I mentioned above largely due to the reestablishment of contacts with their homeland, however, unlike that in Western countries, it is often paired with tension between Circassians and the ethnic majority of the home country, like Arabs or Turks (Colarusso, 1991: pp. 656-669). Some Circassians believe that Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Palestine/Israel, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, and Russia have all forced assimilation of Circassians, repressed their indigenous and native culture in the past, and suppressed various efforts at past revival identity.

The case of Turkey in Diaspora is specific. Turkish nationalism has experienced a long evolutionary process, starting from the late Ottoman era. The official formulation of Turkish national identity denies the ethnic and cultural diversity in the country, the only exception being the religious minorities that were recognized in the Treaty of Lausanne 1923<sup>279</sup> (Kirişçi, 2000: p.01), where Turkey was finally recognized internationally as a sovereign state (Zürcher, 1994: p. 160). A society that is traditionally known as multi-ethnic and multi-cultural would be transformed into a uniform Turkish nation-state. During this discourse, Muslim identity has preserved itself and this was acknowledged by Turkish authorities to be the key to achieving *Turkishness* (Ilgener, 2013: p. 61). Further, non-Muslims were seen as a barrier to get the idea of *Turkishness*. It is generally known that Turkish governments have interpreted the term “Turkish descent and culture” to cover Turkish-speaking groups or ethnically Turkish groups, but also Albanians, Bosnians, Circassians, and Tatars, particularly from the Balkans (Kirişçi, 2000: p.07).

Nonetheless, in the past few years, in many of these countries, the diaspora has become much more aware of their identities and activities. Nart-TV, a program broadcasting from

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279. The Treaty of Lausanne was a peace treaty signed in the Palais de Rumine, Lausanne, Switzerland, on 24 July 1923. It officially settled the conflict that had originally existed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied French Republic, British Empire, Kingdom of Italy, Empire of Japan, Kingdom of Greece, and the Kingdom of Romania since the onset of World War I.



Adyghea, about Circassian identity, history, and life, is now broadcasting in many Middle Eastern countries, including Israel and Jordan (Adyghea NatPress, 2010). Maybe one of the best jobs of the diasporic community was opening a university on 8 August 2010, in Amman, Jordan, specifically for Circassians to preserve Circassian heritage and culture, with classes in the Circassian language and on Circassian culture and history in addition to practical topics (Namrouqa, 2010).

To sum up, I can divide the modern Circassian movements into two periods with a similar range of strands but different characters of development. The first period took place in 1989–2000; the second started in 2005 and is ongoing (Halbach, 2014: p. 02). The Circassian movement is based on three shared strategic goals: recognition of the genocide, repatriation of the diaspora, and unification of the territories. These main purposes form the ideological foundation of the Circassian movements inside and among Diaspora. The versatility of the movement appears on the level of keeping many artful tendencies toward such matters as the 2014 Winter Olympics, the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Russian–Circassian relations, the inclusion of Adyghea Republic in a federal district different from *Kabardin-Balkar* and *Karachay-Cherkess*, and so on.

As I mentioned earlier, the highest diversity of instrumental positions applies to the 2014 Olympics. The Circassian question was closely related to the Sochi Olympics in several symbolic ways. Therefore, the Olympic Games of 2014 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the failure in 1864, when Tsar Alexander II declared victory for Russia. Every year on 21 May, Circassians around the world light 101 candles and observe a minute of silence in memory of the 101-year war (Zhemukhov, 2012: p.507).

### **3.7 Transforming Ethnic Identity into National Identity**

As it is mentioned in the above sections, the process of Circassian ethno-political mobilization began in the '60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>280</sup>; however, its acceleration came on in the second of '80s. This process was the main part of transferring ethnic identity into national identity through the political point of view. This period is connected with the Gorbachev's political and economic reforms aiming to multinational empire modernization. Unintended consequences of the reforms became absolute soviet power decline leading to the dismantling of Soviet Union. The totalitarian system release and the political decentralization are appeared to be key catalysts of the ethnic clashes with roots lying in

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280. Somewhere has been running since the beginning of the Russian colonization by Caucasian War.

ethnic trauma of the last century. Ethno-mobilization has arisen then out of ethnic interactions given by historical reminiscence and asymmetric status of particular groups within the federal system defined by the Soviet authorities during the '20s and '30s of the last century. In its implication, social, economic and cultural discrimination called 'internal colonization' occurred which was earlier 'Russification'. On the contrary, the 'ethnic competition' about economic and political resource control within given territory happened in cases of a titular group superior status or equal status of two titular groups. Separatism, irredentism or territorial autonomous were final goals of ethnic-mobilization efforts in both theoretical cases described above. Even in some cases, the mobilization led to armed conflicts, especially in the Kabardin-Balkar Republic. The modernist theories dealing with nationalism stress that social and economic societal modernization predates the mobilization and consequently leads to internal ethnic consolidation and nation-formation including of self-determination in face of the other groups.

Since the 1990s Circassian diasporic community, has gained new meanings: it has become a tool for social science to investigate the hybrid, transnational and global sites of identities and politics that challenge the national order of things, the naturalized and normalized understanding of the world of nations as a discrete partitioning of territory (Malkki, 2001: p. 55). Rather than referring to particular experiences of certain particular communities, the concept of diaspora has now become crucial for social science to rethink the concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'nationalism' (Shami, 1998). By challenging the conceptual limits imposed by national and ethnic boundaries (Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996) and delineating how the local and global have become intertwined in the processes of globalization (Axel, 2004: p.47), the notion of diaspora opens up new spaces and debates that enable us to understand the dynamics of transnational politics, cultural and economic processes that are formed via the interaction of globalization, and diversity. Dogon in his work (2015) says that "the globalization signifies not only the mobility of people beyond national boundaries and borders but also the problematization of boundaries and borders that creates the possibility of a condition of post-nationality which is marked by the production of *diasporic public spheres* and *non-territorial principles of solidarity*". It deals with how the Circassian diaspora, a Muslim non-Turkish and non-Arab ethnic group, redefine and transform the knowledge of their own identity, history and diasporic experience in the post-Soviet conjuncture, which overlaps, with the processes of globalization and linking with motherland (Brandell, Carlson and Cetrez, 2015: pp.145-146).

Actually, in the post-Soviet decades, traditionalization<sup>281</sup> of ethnic communities as a reaction to the crisis of civil society is the main conflict factor. The changing Russian regions continue to search for ways of resolving conflicts caused by ethnic identity. In the North Caucasus, in this case of ‘Circassia’, ethnonationalism indicates the institutional degradation of civic identity and the destabilization of regional democratic processes. The socio-political coalition is remodeled by ethnic mobilization; religious Radicalism becomes a needed tool for identity-based conflicts. Such conflicts are characterized by ruinous power, it is hard to manage, resolve and set them (Popov, 2017: p. 76).

From this perspective, I followed Anthony Smith (1981) who views modern ethnicity as the continuation of past ethnic revivals. In his opinion, although ethnicity appears as distinguishable from nationalism, ethnic communities can move towards defining themselves as a nation. In this regard, ethnic communities are sighted as self-multipliable cultural entities. This makes ties of ethnicity-specific compared to other allegiance such as economic class since they can easily intersect with various other ideological sources in the construction of present realities. In this respect, ethnicity can form the basis of competing for political or territorial claims, since cultural values and processes are an essential part of the state and nation-building dynamic. Here is good to mention the notion of *Tokluoglu* (2005: pp. 723-728), researcher on ethnicities in turkey: “The cultural field is where new identities are formed and shaped, and in times of social transformation, these competing identities can become part of broader political conflicts and movements, which influence the direction of state and nation building. Ethnicity is an ambivalent source in mobilizing local populations, and, in times of social disturbance, it is difficult to detect the forces that determine the direction of ethnic movements. The respondents’ definitions of modernity reveal how important cultural elements can be in the making of national identities that are exclusive of one another. The contrast between pro-Turk and pro-Russian influence and orientation is marked. Here too, there exist sharp contrasts as well as commonalities that correspond with the conflicting narratives of the government elites and the members of the opposition concerning national and ethnic identity”. This sheds light on some aspects of state formation in Circassia, which was not yet seen as complete during the time the research was carried out.

Summarily, three general premises can be applied when nationalism and ethnopolitical mobilization in the Circassian context are studied. The first one is based on the political and

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281. To make traditional: imbue with traditions or traditionalism.

geographical situation of Circassia in the history of Caucasus and stipulates that nationalism is strong in such areas where political and ethnic boundaries are not identical (Gellner, 2002). The second one brings up that strong nationalism or better to say it here Patriotism and high probability of conflicts magnifies national traumas, which later become part of regional ethnic conflicts (Jelen, 2014: p.116). These traumas are often misused by politicians when it comes to territorial conflicts with a competing nation (Tishkov, 1996). The third premise is inspired by so-called modernist theories and anticipates that transferring from an ethnic into a nation is preceded by an intensive social modernization, which is understood as economic, social, and demographic changes (Dostál, 1999). In addition to these three approaches, the two aspects of the internal and external of this process should be considered. I mean the first mobilization of internal phenomena among *Circassian Society* in Circassia after *Muhajir* memory and second mobilization of external phenomena among Circassian diasporic communities abroad, which was effected on internal phenomena through the process of transforming ethnicity into a nationality.

## 4 Chapter - Consolidation Factors of Circassian Question

### 4.1 Introduction

The consolidation factors of Circassian Question after exile specifically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a most important part of shaping their identity and perhaps it can be said that we are witnessing of changing a regional issue to the global one. I mean this era was most reachable for elites and current society's memory. Therefore, the studies in search of a territory, one whose boundaries have been temporarily designated as the 'post-Soviet space', which I will back to it later in the next chapter. This term points that the societies and states found are in a situation of endless transmission. It reveals that, despite the reams of analysis about the transformation and fragmentation of society, and economy in the post-Soviet era, the frame of resolution continues to be inside-looking and performing with perceptions of regional barriers, monolithic mechanism, and limited territories which each one has their own influences on Circassian Question.

Actually, as I mentioned some of these factors in the previous chapter when I discussed the form factors of the Circassian question. However, I want to highlight how these factors have been consolidating through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is not to deny that there was much continuity in the relations and structures that characterize the parts of what was once a political entity of Circassian Question. One neglected facet of the break-up of the Soviet Union and its accompanying geopolitical changes is the emergence of self-conscious Circassian Diasporas who locate their historical 'homeland'. Situated in different countries, members of these Diasporas are increasingly involved with their newly-accessible homelands through a variety of social, political and economic relations. So since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the independence wars waged against the Russians as well as smaller and associated conflicts, point to the volatile politics of nationalism in this region. These policies have played and signified diaspora populations in various ways. Concepts of boundary and border, identity and ethnicity, territory and diaspora all need to be re-examined in the new regional and global context. In a world of crisscrossed economies, intersecting systems of meaning, and fragmented identities (Rouse, 1991: p. 08), nationalism is particularly challenged and national boundaries are increasingly transcended by transnational bonds and identities (Shami, 1998).

It is important to note here, however, it is actually existing nationalisms and states that are threatened and that what threatens them is not only supra-national solidarities, but also emergent nationalisms, often called ‘ethnic-nationalisms’. I can bring some example from Shami (1998: pp. 617-618) such as “Diasporas, which link populations transnationally, are often produced through a discourse of nationalism. Conversely, nationalism is progressively being supported by diasporic communities, or at least by mobile and scattered, peoples. In this way, Diasporas are interpolated between nationalism<sup>282</sup> and transnationalism<sup>283</sup>”.

In this chapter, we see how the Circassians managed their identity and survival subjects in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and lead it to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and then how to be concerned about their latter and looking for what is yet to happen. Re-engaging with their past with all its historical details requires the necessity to follow-up factors that show how to find a solution to the issues related to the Circassian identity with identifying the perpetrators and selecting the appropriate mechanism of applying the relevant rules for the realization of their legal rights.

I should draw this point that Circassians’ efforts to build the national identity through Soviet and post-Soviet era and the approach into the Circassian Question was increased in this era. Therefore, in this chapter, I thought it is better to review their efforts under this circumstance which there was an ideological system and then Russification policy. So, I divided into two part, firstly I do a survey on Circassian memory and identity in the Soviet Period which were included of the World War II and Soviet historiography and then second, on Post-Soviet reaction which was included of formatting some Circassian associations and new regional policies. Finally, I will open this discussion about how the Circassian Question can count as a world issue.

## **4.2 Circassian Memory & Identity in Soviet Era**

The collapse of the Russian Empire and the revolution of 1917 plunged the North Caucasus into chaos how Circassians in their homeland again attempted to struggle for their independence or at least rethinking about the idea of Circassia. Caucasian nations, consisting of different ethnic groups, declared their independence based on the mutual alliance, and with the support of the Ottomans, founded the Mountainous North Caucasus Republic in 1917. The fact that every local ethnic was represented at the governmental level was an

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282. I mean mostly movements, which seek to form bounded territorial states as embodiments of nations.

283. I mean particularly the linkages, which form solidarities and reciprocities across, and in spite of, national boundaries.

important feature of this new entity in the future. However, after just a short period of independence, the Republics were incorporated into the Soviet Union by force, and a significant percentage of North Caucasian academics and political elites immigrated to new Turkey. New regime means new boundaries and new geopolitics for new units, so in this period we see significant changes in the Circassian political boundaries.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the intervention of Ottoman and British military forces raised the prospect of the fragmentation of the region and helped to ensure that fighting continued in the area until 1923. The success of the Soviet military and political strategy secured the North Caucasus but brought with it new difficulties, especially with respect to the region's religious authorities (Kolossoff, 1999: pp. 71-81).

The Soviets, in a delicate position for the first half of the 1920s, initially exercised caution in the implementation of measures to limit the role of *Sharia* law and religious institutions that had been shown after the revolution. By the mid-1920s, however, the Soviets felt confident and turned their efforts towards reshaping the political and socio-economic character of the North Caucasus. They launched a drive to disarm the local population, along with moves to weaken the clergy and the nationalists who had initially supported the revolution. Both *Sharia* courts and the imperial system of Muftiates<sup>284</sup> were abolished in 1926 and scripts based on the Latin alphabet were imposed on the languages of the region, breaking the links created by the common use of Arabic (Melvin, 2007: p. 10). In 1928, a full-scale assault on religious authorities was launched in conjunction with the campaign to introduce the collectivization of agriculture. These policies without any doubt led in many cases to the uprising, often violent. In the 1930s, the North Caucasus was caught up in the wave of political arrests that swept the country. Still fearful of Pan-Islamic influences, the Soviets sought, alongside their efforts to undermine the position of the religious authorities and the Arabic language, to divide the region along broadly ethnolinguistic lines. A process of territorial and administrative delimitation was implemented between 1922 and 1936, establishing new ethnoterritorial political entities. This created numerous anomalies because the diversity of the population ensured that the new borders cut across regional, linguistic, ethno-religious and clan ties (Hirsch, 2005: chapters 3, 4 and 5). In addition, local culture was equated with backwardness and some manifestations of it were persecuted.

This process was followed by a succession of border realignments and territorial transfers, fostering further resentment and, in many cases, promoting hostility between neighboring

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284. A *Muftiate* is an administrative territorial entity under the supervision of a mufti.

communities. The division of the republics such as the repeated subdivision of the Circassians into the ‘new’ nationalities of Adyghean, Cherkessian, and Kabardian; the amalgamation of different nationalities into single territorial units, for example, the creation of the Kabardin-Balkar autonomous oblast in 1922; created particular problems in the next years.

A central part of the Stalinist social engineering project was the creation of a new set of dependable national elites as the most influenced part of society. In the late 1930s, most of the Communist Party and government leaders of the North Caucasus were purged and replaced with cadres loyal to Moscow. All decisions, no matter how trivial, were made in the capital. The new leaders took a central part in the subsequent campaign to extend Moscow’s control over the region and to drive forward the Soviet project of transformation and modernization. It was only after the demise of the Soviet Union that the full extent of the devastation was revealed (Jaimoukha, 2001: p. 76; Melvin, 2007).

Moreover, anti-Islamism campaigns started during this period. The destruction of mosques was prevalent among Muslim communities, which despite the hardline policies remained the most troublesome zone of the Soviet Union for the central government. As a result of the anti-Islam campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s, much of the intellectual culture of Islam in the North Caucasus, which had flourished in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and persisted until 1917, was destroyed. The destruction of *madrasas*<sup>285</sup> and *maktabs*<sup>286</sup>, in particular, disrupted the system of Islamic confessional education, while the switch from the Persian/Arabic script ensured that new generations were cut off from previous Islamic scholarship. The religious life of ordinary Muslims, who were deprived of opportunities to worship openly, became confined to so-called parallel Islam, dominated by Sufism and a focus on local traditional rites and practices (Melvin, 2007: pp. 10-11).

It should be mentioned that by 1929 Soviet power had been consolidated throughout the former Russian Empire. Actually, the policy of tolerance towards the north Caucasus was scrapped. Instead, collectivization as the economic and social policy was initiated and it caused the north Caucasian traditional economic and social structures to collapse. In this time, Circassian political figures and intellectuals were subjected to ruthless systematic

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285. Islamic colleges; *Madrasa* is the Arabic word for any type of educational institution, whether secular or religious, and whether a school, college, or university.

286. *Maktab* or *Maktabeh* or *Maktabkhaneh*, also called a *Kuttab* ‘school’ is an Arabic word meaning elementary schools.



pogroms. This centralization tried to divide the ethnics and named them new approach with nation-building instead of concentrating on ethnic culture.

#### 4.2.1 Shaping new Boundaries

As mentioned in earlier chapters, during Soviet, the Circassians lived in four autonomous regions of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (R.S.F.S.R)<sup>287</sup>. I try to summarily mention the history of establishing these new boundaries.

First, right after the collapse of the Russian imperial state, the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus (MRNC)<sup>288</sup> was shaped from 1917 until 1920. MRNC included most of the territory of the former Terek Oblast and Dagestan Oblast of the Russian Empire as it mentioned in the previous chapter. The MRNC was captured in June 1920 by the Red Army of Bolshevik Russia and the Government of the republic was forced to leave the Caucasus. Later in January 1921, the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK)<sup>289</sup> of the R.S.F.S.R<sup>290</sup> had to legitimize the Mountain and Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics of the Soviet Union (A.S.S.R)<sup>291</sup>. The former included the Chechen, Ingush, Ossetian, Kabardin, Balkar, Karachay, and later Sunzha districts<sup>292</sup> and the cities of Vladikavkaz and Grozny as separate districts. In 1921-1924, the Mountain Autonomous Republic was split into autonomous peoples' units (Kuchukov, 1992: pp. 129-131) (Map. 28). On 1 September 1921, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee passed the decision to remove the Kabarda District from the Mountain Republic and form the

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287. in Russian SFSR or RSFSR: Российская Советская Федеративная Социалистическая Республика - *Rossiyskaya Sovetskaya Federativnaya Sotsialisticheskaya Respublika*, previously known as the Russian Soviet Republic and the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic as well as being unofficially known as the Russian Federation, Soviet Russia, or simply Russia, was an independent state from 1917 to 1922 and afterwards the largest, most populous and most economically developed of the 15 Soviet socialist republics of the Soviet Union (USSR) from 1922 to 1991 and then a sovereign part of the Soviet Union with priority of Russian laws over Union-level legislation in 1990 and 1991 during the last two years of the existence of the USSR.

288. Also known as the Mountain Republic or the Republic of the Mountaineers; in Russian: Республика Союза Горцев Северного Кавказа - *Respublika Soyuza Gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza*

289. All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) was the highest legislative, administrative, and revising body of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic from 1917 until 1937.

290. Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

291. Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics of the Soviet Union

292. Currently Ingushetia

Kabardian Autonomous Region. In November 1921, the Constituent Congress of the Soviets of Workers, Peasants and Red Army Men's Deputies of Kabarda finally formed the KAO as part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. In 1922, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic passed a decision, under which Balkar was removed from the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics of the Soviet Union to become the Kabardin-Balkar Autonomous Oblast (Ibid, pp. 129-136). The Oblast was formed in 1921 as the Kabardian Autonomous Oblast before becoming the Kabardin-Balkar Autonomous Oblast on 16 January 1922. Hence 16 October 1924, it had belonged to North Caucasus Krai<sup>293</sup>. On 5 December 1936, it was separated from North Caucasus Krai, elevated in status and named Kabardin-Balkar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

It was also the same story about the Cherkessians and the Karachays. In 1922, the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast left the Mountain A.S.S.R. to become a new administrative unit. It brought together the Turkic-speaking Karachays, who lived in the mountains of the Central Caucasus, and the Adygheans, who lived in the left-bank valley of River Kuban. The oblast was disappeared in 1926, to form the Karachay Autonomous Oblast and Cherkess Autonomous Oblast. The Cherkess Autonomous Oblast created on April 26, 1926, by the split of the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast. It was called the Cherkess National Okrug<sup>294</sup> until April 30, 1928.

Adyghea Autonomous Oblast was established within the Russian SFSR on July 27, 1922, on the territories of Kuban-Black Sea Oblast primarily settled by the Adyghean people. At that time, Krasnodar was the administrative center. It was renamed Adyghea Autonomous Oblast on August 24, 1922, soon after its creation. Later in October 1924, it became part of North Caucasus Krai. It was renamed Adyghea Autonomous Oblast in July 1928. The city of Maykop was added to the Adyghe and Maykop designated the administrative center of the autonomous oblast in 1936. Adyghea AO became part of Krasnodar Krai when it was established on September 13, 1937 (Wikipedia) (Map. 29).

In 1922, there were two autonomous regions with practically similar names the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Region on the upper reaches of the Kuban and the Cherkess

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293. In Russian: Северо-Кавказский край - Severo-Kavkazskiy kray, was an administrative division within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of the Soviet Union. It was established on 17 October 1924. Its administrative center was Rostov-on-Don until 10 January 1934, Pyatigorsk until January 1936, then Ordzhonikidze (today Vladikavkaz) and, from 15 December 1936, Voroshilovsk (today Stavropol).

294. In Russian: Черкесский национальный округ - Cherkessky natsionalny okrug

Autonomous Region on the lower reaches of the same river. On 22 August 1922, the VTsIK R.S.F.S.R. changed the name of the latter to the Adyghea Autonomous Region “to avoid misunderstanding and confusion”.

In 1924-1945, there was the Shapsug National District in the Krasnodar Territory stretching along the Black Sea coast to the south and the north of Tuapse<sup>295</sup>; after 1945, the Shapsugs were not registered as such in population censuses an eloquent fact (Shakhnazarian, 2008: pp. 7, 21-22). The national district comprised 14 villages, along with the Adyghean population who lived in the spa zone.

#### **4.2.2 Soviet Nation Building**

Ethnically and linguistically, the Northwest Caucasus was one of the most diverse regions in the Soviet Union. Their sizes vary from the residents of a single village to several hundred thousand. Long before contact with Russia and the modern world, the people in the Caucasus were aware of their ethnic and linguistic divisions, but these had no political overtones and only stayed as local entities. In spite of this ethnic, linguistic and even religious diversity all the north Caucasians shared the same way of life, traditions, customs, and even costume, maybe only we can divide between west and east of Caucasus. In other words, while fully aware of their own peculiarities, all these groups had a common culture and identity (Gammer, 1995). Before any analysis, we should consider that the ethnic definition and delimitation was introduced into the Northern Caucasus mostly by Russian ethnographers and administrators (Jersild, 1996), not by Persian or Ottoman states. By 1917 these concepts were internalized, at least by the modern-educated layer of society. Thus, the short-lived “the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus – MRNC” (1918 – 1919) was planned to be a federal republic of seven national states. It was, however, the Soviet regime, and more precisely Stalin as Commissar for Nationalities Affairs, which created and built the existing peoples in the Northern Caucasus. Soviet nationalities policies vis-à-vis the Muslims of the ex-Russian Empire was motivated by a strong fear of Pan-Islamism. It aimed, therefore, at a triple “divide and rule” of these societies by (1) dividing them from each other by creating new peoples out of existing ethnic groups and new literary languages to replace long-established new linguae; (2) dividing them from the outside Muslim world by these two means as well, as well as by the switch from the Persian/Arabic into the Latin and later on

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295. *Tuapse* is a town in Krasnodar Krai, Russia, situated on the northeast shore of the Black Sea, south of Gelendzhik and north of Sochi.

to the Cyrillic orthography; and (3) dividing them from their past by the above new languages and alphabets. In the Northern Caucasus the application of this policy started with the division of the region between two multi-ethnic Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs) within the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), Dagestan and the Mountain Republic. This method in my opinion was the same as previous policy during Russian Empire in the region.

As it mentioned, after some fluctuation their number stabilized in the late 1950s at five: the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, the North Ossetia ASSR, the Kabardin-Balkar ASSR, the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast and the Adyghea. In this way three closely, kin-related Muslim ethnic groups were split into separate peoples and divided among two or even three republics: the Circassians into Kabard, Cherkess and Adyghe; the Vaynaks into Chechens and Ingush; and the Karachay and Balkars were separated from each other. In all three cases, it seems the Soviets merely reconfirmed divisions made by the Tsarist authorities (Hirsch, 2005).

All these new “nation or ethnic” developed in due time their own identity and nationalism and proceeded along divergent paths. Thus, a large potential was created for “national” strife and conflict later. The policy of creating territorial ethnic autonomies added further reasons to raise this potential (Hirsch, 2005; Hajda and Beissinger, 1990; Motyl, 1990; Nahaylo and Swoboda, 1990).

It should be noted that the political-administrative borders diverged markedly and more often than not on purpose from ethnic borders. Consequently, large portions of ethnic groups and peoples found themselves outside of their territorial autonomies as non-titular minorities with no national rights. All these problems and frictions were kept under a tight lid during the Soviet period (Gammer, 2014: pp. 37-47)

#### **4.3 World War II in the charge of betrayal**

World War II had a profound impact on the region, specifically on Circassia. Actually, the North Caucasus was briefly occupied by the Nazi forces in 1942. With the advance of the German forces, the Soviet authorities began to fear that some Muslim communities in the North Caucasus might shift their loyalties. In response, the authorities recanted their earlier policy and officially recognized Islam, although within a tightly controlled framework. Four new Muftiates, named ‘spiritual boards of Muslims’, was created and charged with supervising the religious activities of Islamic groups in various parts of the Soviet Union. Like the Muftiates of imperial times, they were answerable to the political

authorities. One Muftiate was created for the North Caucasus. The German Army reached the North Caucasus in 1942, on its way to attempt to secure the Caucasian oilfields, and occupied some parts of the region until 1943. However, there was some confusion as the Germans thought that they were Jewish because of their being circumcised, not realizing that Islam also prescribed the rite. The Jews of Nalchik escaped Nazi persecution by blending with the Kabardians, being somewhat assimilated to the Circassian way of life (Jaimoukha, 2001: p.77; Melvin, 2007).

During this period, to curry favor with the local Muslims, Germany closed collective farms, reopened mosques and promised support for sovereignty to those groups that were willing to cooperate. The mistrust fostered during this period led directly to one of the darkest periods in the history of the native peoples of the North Caucasus. Between November 1943 and March 1944, based on decrees signed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the government of Josef Stalin had entire ethnic groups rounded up, loaded into wagons, and transported to Central Asia and Siberia.

The policy of population transferred and forced settlements as the punitive deportations of Caucasian nationalities was declared the guilty of cooperation with Nazi occupants. This policy caused a number of peoples of North Caucasus and Crimea such as Chechens, Ingush<sup>296</sup>, Balkars, Karachays, Meskhetian<sup>297</sup>, Crimean Tatars<sup>298</sup>, as well as Kalmyks<sup>299</sup> and some small group of Circassians deport to Central Asia. The expulsion, preceded by the 1940–1944, was ordered by Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin, as a part of a Soviet forced settlement program and population transfer that affected several million people of non-Russian Soviet ethnicities between the 1930s and the 1950s. This should mention that this

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296. The Deportation of the Chechens and Ingush, also known as Aardakh (Chechen: Aardax), Operation Lentil (Russian: Чечевница, Chechevitsa; Chechen: Вайнах махкахбахар Vaynax Maxkaxbaxar) was the Soviet forced transfer of the whole of the Vainakh (Chechen and Ingush) populations of the North Caucasus to Central Asia on February 23, 1944, during World War II.

297. Meskhetian Turks also known as Ahiska Turks are an ethnic subgroup of Turks formerly inhabiting the Meskheti region of Georgia, along the border with Turkey.

298. They are a Turkic ethnic group that formed in the Crimean Peninsula during the 13–17th centuries, primarily from the Islamic Turkic tribes that invaded the Greek settled land now known as Crimea in Eastern Europe from the Asian steppes beginning in the 10th century, with contributions from the pre-Cuman population of Crimea.

299. The Kalmyks are the *Oirats* in Russia, whose ancestors migrated from Dzungaria in 1607. They created the Kalmyk Khanate in 1630–1724 in Russia's North Caucasus territory

policy did not effect on Circassians directly, but later in 1957 when deported ethnics return to their homeland, made some conflicts.

Kuchukov (1992: pp.178-179) the historian says in his research: “In 1953, the three architects of the deportation perished: shortly after Stalin died on March 5, Beria and Kobulov were arrested on June 27, 1953. They were convicted on multiple charges, sentenced to death and executed on December 23, 1953. However, these charges were unrelated to the crimes of deportations and were merely a ploy to remove them from power. Nikita Khrushchev<sup>300</sup> became the new Soviet leader and revoked numerous deportations, even denouncing Stalin. The exile lasted for 13 years and the survivors would not return to their native lands until 1957, after the new Soviet authorities under Nikita Khrushchev reversed many of Stalin’s policies, including the deportations of nations. For example, the leaders of the Kabardin A.S.S.R. did not occupy the abandoned Balkar villages, which helped avoid ethnic clashes. On 9 January 1957, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. passed a Decree on Transforming the Kabardia A.S.S.R. into the Kabardin-Balkar A.S.S.R”.

Nevertheless, generally, when the deportees returned to their homeland, they found their farms and infrastructure had deteriorated. Worse still, they found other peoples living in their homes and viewed these other ethnicities with hostility. The Kabardin-Balkar ASSR and the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Region, all of which had been dissolved in 1943–44, were reestablished in 1957, but not all of their former territory was returned to them (Krag & Funch, 1995: p. 35).

The deported groups view the Stalinist exile as a genocidal experience, and it has a significant effect on current interethnic relations, conflicts over territory and perception of the state’s legitimacy. There were acute tensions between the exiled and the ethnic groups that had often been forcefully resettled in their houses; and return to some regions was prohibited or restricted, producing yet more still unresolved disputes. In 1988-1990, informal organizations mushroomed in and around the region and organized public deliberation on previously taboo pages of national history; some later formed the nuclei of national

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300. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev (1894 – 1971) was a Soviet statesman who led the Soviet Union during part of the Cold War as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964, and as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, or Premier, from 1958 to 1964. Khrushchev was responsible for the de-Stalinization of the Soviet Union, for backing the progress of the early Soviet space program, and for several relatively liberal reforms in areas of domestic policy. Khrushchev's party colleagues removed him from power in 1964, replacing him with Leonid Brezhnev as First Secretary and Alexei Kosygin as Premier.

movements and ethno-political parties which directly had influences on Circassian Question and formally effected on their identity (Crisis Group, 2012: p. 08).

#### **4.4 Post-Stalin era & Perestroika**

The North Caucasus and Circassia entered a period of relative stability after Stalin's death in 1953. However, the Soviet authorities' tight control masked important developments in the societies of Circassia. Maybe should be said that these were due to the continuing legacy of the Russian imperial and Soviet policies toward the region, particularly the relocations. So they were faced by a new phenomenon in the region, accordingly by new policies and newcomers. In addition, Islam enjoyed a resurgence in the decades after World War II and it increasingly acquired a political character (Ro'i, 2000: p. 407; Melvin, 2007). As mentioned earlier, the *Tariqa* became symbols of ethnonational affiliation and an effective instrument of community survival and solidarity. In this way, religious and ethnic elements were again fused as Sufi identity merged with the social and economic organization of the community. Elsewhere, Islamic applications and networks expanded secretly, especially among the younger generation. There is evidence that these networks were engaged in strengthening national identities, often in opposition to Russia, and in seeking to deflect young people from communist influences and participation in public life (Ibid, p. 417).

In the 1960s Islam acquired new momentum, in part as a result of the Communist Party's assessment of Soviet reality as 'mature socialism', which allegedly was immune from any anti-communist ideologies of a religious or nationalist nature. It was assumed that Islam and its clerics had been fully integrated into the Soviet system. For a period, the *Muftiates* were allowed greater freedom. In the late 1970s, according to official Soviet figures, there were only 300 official registered mosques in the whole of the Soviet Union, but 700 unregistered mosques, specifically in the North Caucasus (Hunter, 2004: p. 34). However, in the 1980s Soviet involvement in the war in Afghanistan raised tensions again and the authorities re-imposed stricter control.

Actually, I think the experience of centralized rule from outside the North Caucasus and Circassia during the Soviet period had a significant impact on the social organization in the region. Faced with the apparent complexity of social relations in the North Caucasus, Soviet policy was strongly shaped by a perception of the dominance of social institutions and loyalties defined principally by clan and kin. This understanding of the nature of the region's socio-political character built upon the imperial Russian approach to the region, often itself

a reflection of the Orientalist tradition in Russian scholarship and colonial policy (Jersild, 2003).

The manipulation of these divisions for political gain was an important element in both regimes' efforts to control developments in the region. This approach did little to promote the social modernization of the region and instead served to entrench traditional modes of social organization. There is evidence that, in the relative stability of the post-Stalin era, it even promoted conservatism and the informal economic activities that have provided the basis for the rise of corruption following the failure of the Soviet Union. During the post-Stalin period, the long-standing Soviet policy of promoting national identities in the North Caucasus began to bear fruit. There were signs of growing national consciousness, and key sections of the indigenous populations started to make important social, economic and political progress. Increasingly, republic-level bureaucracies were staffed with national cadres. Their advancement helped to promote the urbanization and modernization of the region's non-Russian populations. At the same time, rising numbers of the indigenous peoples found their way into higher education, contributing to the emergence of a national cultural intelligentsia. These developments, along with the resurgence of Islam, challenged Soviet power in the North Caucasus in a variety of ways. In particular, the advancement of the non-ethnic Russian populations weakened the position of the Slavic settlers, leading to outmigration of the Slavic population from the late 1960s. The domination of the ethnic Russian settler communities over the predominately-rural societies of the indigenous peoples had previously cemented the central government's control. Their departure not only weakened the Soviet Administration's ability to find loyal local cadres but also undermined the position of the Russian language and the center's control over strategic institutions, the education system, the advanced economic sectors, and the republic-level executive agencies.

The 1960's, 70's and early 80's present along lacuna, a string of non-events, characterized by stagnation. The leadership in the three republics kept the peace and dutifully implemented central dictates. It was only in the middle 80's that the quiet was interrupted by reformist policies of *Perestroika* and glasnost. The breakdown of the Soviet order under Mikhail Gorbachev had another dramatic impact on Circassia. During the era of *Perestroika*<sup>301</sup>, the weakness of central political authority coupled with the decay of the institutions embodying

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301. Perestroika was a political movement for reformation within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the 1980s and 1990s and is widely associated with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his glasnost policy reform.



the Soviet Union's domination of the North Caucasus allowed the emergence of political and social movements promoting diverse visions of the region's future. However, it was not Islam that became the primary means to mobilize popular support against Russia, as many experts had predicted. Rather, a variety of nationalist movements that sought to promote political sovereignty and to advance cultural and linguistic demands grew up in the republics of the North Caucasus. The legacy of Soviet territorial division and nation-building affected the whole of the Caucasus region during this period (Hunter, 2006: pp. 111-125). At the same time, efforts were made, backed in large part promoted by Russia, to promote solidarity among the peoples of the region and to overcome the history of division, notably in the form of the Confederation of the Peoples of the Caucasus on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, to promote unity in the North Caucasus and which later became involved in the 1992–93 war in Abkhazia and conflicts between Circassians and Turkic highlanders. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, much of the older Islamic elite, many members of which were tainted by involvement in the Soviet-run Islamic authorities, was challenged by a younger generation. A variety of parties claiming their inspiration from versions of Islam appeared. Political liberalization also brought with it a relaxation of border controls and opened Russia's Muslims to external influences; notably, Salafism began to grow in the North Caucasus (Ibid: pp. 153-155.)

#### 4.5 Soviet Historiography

The term of Soviet historiography is a difficult and controversial issue; therefore, I just point it out to draw your attention to how it influenced on *Circassian Question*. Actually, the Soviet historiography is the methodology of history studies by historians in the Soviet Union. During Soviet, the studying history was signed by limitations inflicted by the *Communist Party of the Soviet Union*<sup>302</sup>. Also nowadays 'Soviet historiography' is itself the subject of modern studies.

First, I define this term. *George M. Enteen* identifies two approaches to study the Soviet historiography. A totalitarian accost associated with the Western analysis of the Soviet Union as a totalitarian governance, controlled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. "This school thought that signs of dissent merely represented a misreading of commands from above" (Enteen, 2002: p.363). On the other hand, in Markwick's view, there are an issue of important post-war historiographical movements, which have a background

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302. CPSU

in the 1920s and 1930s. Amazingly, these located culturally and psychologically near the history. This crystallized the *Piatichlenka* or five acceptable moments of history in terms of vulgar dialectical materialism: primitive-communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism (Markwick, 2006: p. 284).

After much delay, caused by shifts in Stalinist nationalities policy and the repression of ethnic communities during World War II, the period from the mid-1950s through the 1960s witnessed a flowering of scholarship on the nationalities of the Soviet Union and those of the North Caucasus in particular. This period saw the publication of national histories for each autonomous republic and autonomous oblast of the North Caucasus (Tillett, 1969). These studies offered official interpretations of historical debates concerning the social and political history of the North Caucasus and provided a master narrative on the historical development of the region that, with few changes, would last for the remainder of the Soviet period. We should consider that the Soviets re-wrote Circassian history according to their ideological prescriptions.

In general, I think ‘Soviet historiography’ presented the relations between Russia and Circassians as friendly, the fact of Russian expansion to the Northern Caucasus in the eighteenth-twentieth centuries being safely ignored. In the 1940s-early 1950s, Soviet historians interpreted the events unfolding at that time in the Northern Caucasus as the Russian Empire’s aggressive policy.

The Soviet historians insisted on the voluntary adhesion and adherence of Kabarda to the Russian State: This was the official Soviet version devised to explain the celebration in 1957 of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the voluntary adherence of Kabarda to Russia (Figure. 17). While the preliminaries for the splendiferous celebrations were in full swing, *Ramazan Trakho*, who opposed with the Soviet interpretation of history, wrote in Munich: “This is another attempt of Soviet historiography as a ‘general line of the Party’ to write a new history of the non-Russian peoples. I cannot go into the details of these absurdities lest to upturn my consistent exposition of historical facts, which convincingly say that there was no voluntary adherence of Kabarda to Russia” (Trakho, 1992: p. 11).

Another important point of view of Soviet historians are about Caucasus War where they explained the Caucasian or Russo-Circassian, War by the stiff rivalry between Russia and Ottoman in the Northern Caucasus; this shows why the Russian Empire started to pay more attention. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Russians realized that Islam made Kabardians allies of the Ottoman Empire and a threat to Russian position, an acceptable excuse of Russian policies in the Northern Caucasus for Soviet historians. *Trakho*, on the other hand, wrote that in 1736,

during the Russo-Ottoman War, the Kabardian sided with the Porte, which promised to recognize their independence. Indeed, “Art 6 of the Belgrade Peace Treaty [18 September 1739] stated: About the two Kabardas, i. e. Greater and Lesser, and the Kabardian people, both sides agree that they should be free and not under the influence of either the one or the other Empire” (Namitok, 1956: p. 17). Soviet historians, on the other hand, never denied the fact that at the early stages of the war, Lesser Kabarda was situated to the south of Mozdok (Lanzillotti, 2016: pp. 503-521).

Classic iterations of the dominant narrative of Circassia’s hegemony over its highlander neighbors based on its control of extensive territorial resources in the plains and foothills and Russian support abound in the major histories of the peoples of the central Caucasus from the 1950s and 1960s. According to Bushuev’s (1959: p.105) *History of the North Ossetian ASSR*:

“Kabarda...receive[d] military and other forms of support from Russia, which increased the former’s influence on other highlands peoples...The Kabardian elite tried to selfishly benefit from their position. Kabardian princes began to regard all highlanders living between [Mount] Elbrus and Digoria [west Ossetia] as their slaves and those farther afield as their tributaries”.

In her classic political history of the North Caucasus, *The Peoples of the North Caucasus and their Connections with Russia*, Kusheva (1963: p.121) writes:

“Several neighboring tribes were dependent upon the Kabardian feudal lords: the Abazas, Balkars, Ossetians, and Ingushes paid iasak – payment in kind [natural’nyi obrok]. The reason for this dependence...was the mountain dwellers’ need to use fall and winter pastures on the plains”.

Finally, in terms of the territory controlled by Kabardian, in *History of the Kabardin-Balkar ASSR*, Gardanov (1967: pp. 132–133) explains:

“Kabarda...occupied a vast territory in the Terek River basin – approximately from the River Kuma in the west to the River Sunzha in the east...[and in the north] the Piatigor’e area was [also] heavily...settled by Kabardians. Residents of Greater Kabarda grazed their cattle not only along the Kuma but also [farther west] along the upper Kuban”.

After the conclusion of the fraught process of border delimitation in the North Caucasus by the late 1920s, subsequent histories of intercommunal relations and the land question in the pre-tsarist North Caucasus were more in line with Soviet ideological standards: they were less sensationalist and hyperbolic in their descriptions of the oppressive might of Kabarda; they specified that only the small stratum of Kabardian princes and nobles benefitted from

the highlanders' tribute payments; and they emphasized class over ethnicity in their analyses. These works were also based on a far closer reading of archival sources than the more politicized works of Aliev, Khubiev-Karachailly, and Kodzaev.

Much of the historical scholarship on the history of intercommunal relations in the central Caucasus published from the late 1950s and 1960s on reflected Kokiev's ideas of "suzerain-vassal dependence", "a class-based union of elites", and "double oppression". The publication of national histories of the peoples of the North Caucasus for popular consumption during this period exposed the wider public – for the first time, given the recent rise of mass literacy – in the national republics and oblasts of the region to these ideas. The ideas contained within these histories, carefully tailored to the prerogatives of Soviet nationality policies, played important roles in the construction of national identities in the Late-Soviet period (Lanzillotti, 2016).

#### **4.6 Post-Soviet Reaction**

The nature of Russian and Soviet engagement in the North Caucasus provided the backdrop for many of the developments in the region after the independence of the Russian Federation, which followed the failure of the Soviet Union in December 1991. In particular, the fact that the political mobilization that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet order was initially channeled along the fault lines of ethnicity and nationalism was due largely to the legacies of the Russian imperial and Soviet projects to promote fragmentation in the region, including separate national identities. The challenge of the new Russian authorities was to overcome this fragmentation and to find ways to promote the new Russia as a common project for all its communities, including those in the North Caucasus. In fact, the policies pursued by the post-Soviet leaders did little to meet this challenge in the North Caucasus and rather served to accelerate the deterioration of stability and security in the region and to promote even further division. In the case of Circassian Question, it was the best time to reengage with their heritage and follow up their questions.

Therefore, it is obvious that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of the most serious internal policy challenges facing the Russian state has unquestionably been Moscow's relations with the North Caucasus republics. A well-known Russian expert on the modern north Caucasus, Sergey Markedonov<sup>303</sup>, describes the features of current Russian policy in the Caucasus in the following terms: 'Entire republics have been farmed out to outwardly

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303. In Russian: Сергей Мирославович Маркедонов

loyal clans who are simply required to ensure that voters in elections produce the “right” results. The country, instead of being strengthened, has been fundamentally weakened’ (Markedonov, 2011).

In reaction to these debates, on 26 April 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the Russian SSR, under Boris Yeltsin’s leadership, passed the Law on the Rehabilitation of the Repressed Peoples that aimed to remedy historical injustices and set the stage for democratization in inter-ethnic relations<sup>304</sup>. It decried oppressive Soviet acts towards certain nations as policies of defamation and genocide and declared them extralegal and criminal. It also defined “repressed people”; abolished all provisions and legal acts, including those issued by local governments that discriminated against the victims; and recognized the state’s responsibility for restitution and outlined specific measures to this end. Two provisions stipulating the right to “territorial rehabilitation” for those who had been deported legitimized and strengthened demands to change the territorial status quo<sup>305</sup>. However, the law provided that rehabilitation should not infringe on the rights of current residents and stipulated no mechanisms to ensure smooth territorial transfer, and confrontation between the communities involved spiraled. Instead of reconciliation and equality, it thus accelerated victims’ ethnic mobilization and defensive nationalism among other affected parties. More laws that are recent have continued to exacerbate tensions. Those on the remote lawn are a source of multiple collision over land. Distant pasture cattle breeding is based on the seasonal movements of herds between mountains and lowlands<sup>306</sup> (Crisis Group, 2012).

As already noted, the commentary of historical events has a major part to play in the appearance of the Circassian Question. This makes assessments of the Caucasian War and the manner in which these assessments are reflected in current day Russian policy in the Caucasus, of particular significance. I should include here a separate comment on the special position of the former Russian president Boris Yeltsin. Readers may recall that on the 130th

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304. Law on the Rehabilitation of the Repressed Peoples, RSFSR, no. 1107-1, 26 April 1991.

305. Article 3 of the law states that rehabilitation confirms the right of the repressed peoples to reestablish the integrity of their territory as it existed before the unconstitutional violent border changes and their right to compensation for state-inflicted damages.

Article 6 says the state should act to restore the earlier national-territorial borders, based on the will of the repressed peoples

306. On distant pastures, see Konstantin Kazenin, “Перспективыи риски многонациональных районов равнинного Дагестана” - Prospects and risks of the multinational regions in the plains of Dagestan, Regnum, 8 October 2011.

anniversary of the end of the Caucasian War, on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1994, Yeltsin addressed the peoples of the Caucasus. His address contained the following words: “In the present day, when Russia is constructing a legal state and recognizes the primacy of universal human values, there is an opportunity emerging for an objective interpretation of the events of the Caucasian War as the valiant struggle of the peoples of the Caucasus not only for survival in their native land, but also for the preservation of a distinctive culture, the best features of the national character. The problems we have inherited from the Caucasian War, and particularly the return of the descendants of the Caucasian deportees to their historical homeland, must be resolved at an international level by negotiations attended by all interested parties” (Inal-Ipa, 2012). In our view, this was a missed opportunity for building relations between the center and the peoples of the Caucasus on a new, more robust basis after the collapse of Soviet.

An important factor in the current political processes in the North-Western Caucasus is the re-emergence of the idea of a resurgence or new version of a unified Circassian nation and answering the Circassian Question. Discussions outline a number of ways this could be implemented, ranging from reuniting the people in their historical homeland within a single entity of the Russian Federation to build a dispersed but spiritually and politically continuous nation.

Thus, conflicts based on ethnic, territorial or property grievances may set the stage for new conflicts in the North Caucasus. Any change in administrative borders in the North Caucasus could generate additional pressure to break up the two existing bi-national republics, Karachay-Cherkess and Kabardin-Balkar, which titular nations combine Turkic peoples and Circassians. In addition, it could open the way for efforts to restore a “Greater Circassia”. It could also prompt demands by the leaders of the republics across the region for border changes to incorporate into their own territories lands they see as theirs on an ethnic basis, improperly handed over to others (Goble, 2017). Moscow probably wants to avoid letting such grievances escalate into new conflicts, especially if they may have secondary effects south of the Greater Caucasus range, thus potentially causing both a domestic and international conflict. It should be noted that each of the three Circassian republics has its own constitution, legislative powers, state symbols, official representatives in Moscow and a right to independent foreign ties.

These processes, which are extremely important in political terms in Circassia, ought to be the subject of intense interest from the government at all levels. This is allowing a condition to promote in which the North Caucasus is becoming the subject of the foreign

policy of other states, whose interest is not always to strengthen ties between the republics of the North Caucasus (Inal-Ipa, 2012). Practically, there was some reaction at the begging of '90s in this process which I going to discuss them below.

#### **4.6.1 Northwest Caucasian Federation**

In 1991, the idea of a North Caucasian federation was revived as the vehicle for the people in the region to reach their political aims. The younger Circassians asked the establishment of a unitary Circassian republic, to the dismay of the Russians and their Circassian cronies. The position of the Circassians in the Republic is being undermined by the lack of official support from the Circassians in other republics. This unnatural situation could be resolved by uniting kindred peoples in the two republics: the Karachays and Balkars on the one hand and the Kabardians, Cherkessians, and Abazians, on the other. This is seen as a first step towards the establishment of a Northwest Caucasian Federation, which would also include the Adygheans, Shapsugs, and Abkhazians, by first resolving bones of contention.

The Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus, formed as a confederation in 1917 after the Russian Empire's disintegration and the outbreak of the civil war, was the only serious trying to unite all Caucasus people in a common independent polity before this later idea. After the establishment of Soviet rule, another attempt at administrative consolidation was undertaken, but the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic was eliminated in 1924, and there have been few if any further efforts to revive a common North Caucasus political unit.

#### **4.6.2 Confederation of Mountain Peoples**

The Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus<sup>307</sup> or KGNK (Figure. 18) was a militarized political organization in the Caucasus, active around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, between 1991 and 1994. It changed its name to 'Confederation of the peoples of the Caucasus' (KNK) in October 1992. It is a voluntary conglomeration of the indigenous peoples of the North Caucasus, excluding the Dagestanis. Its principal goal was the reestablishment of the North Caucasus Mountain Republic. We should not forget that it played a decisive role in the 1992–1993 war between Abkhazians and Georgians, rallying militants from the North Caucasian republics to defend Abkhazia against Georgian forces. The Confederation has been inactive since the assassination of its second leader Yusup

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307. In Russian: Конфедерация горских народов Кавказа

Soslambekov (Figure. 19) in 2000 (Wright, 1996: p. 147). Firstly, the KGNK enjoyed enormous popular support and it scored some significant successes.

On the originality of the Abkhaz ethnic-nationalist movement *Aidgylara*<sup>308</sup>, the Assembly of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus was created in Abkhazian capital, Sukhumi on 25 and 26 August 1989. On 13 and 14 October 1990, the Assembly held its second congress in Nalchik, where it was transformed into the so-called Mountain Republic (Shamba, 2008). In Nalchik on 4 November 1990, its membership was expended, and it was renamed Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus. sixteen nations of the Caucasus joined the Confederation and the Assembly elected the president of *Musa Shanibov* (Figure. 20) and 16 vice-president *Yusup Soslanbekov* was the chair of the Caucasian Parliament and Sultan Sosnaliyev was appointed the head of the Confederation's military department. The KNK had been on its way to becoming a major north Caucasian supra-national force when two mishaps broke its momentum.

However, the change of power in Shanibov's home republic, Kabardin-Balkar, in favor of strongly pro-Moscow leader, prevented him from exerting any political influence in the region, forcing him to retire from politics in 1996. Since then, the structure has had no role in the Caucasian affairs, politically. It never disbanded but has been completely inactive since Shanibov's successor, Yusup Soslambekov, was assassinated in Moscow on July 27, 2000 (Lanskoy, 2000). Its forces have been accused of committing war crimes, including the ethnic cleansing of Georgians in the region.

#### 4.7 Congress of International Circassian Association

The first meeting of this idea that gathers all Circassians under the unit organization was International Circassian Congress (ICC), which was held in Nalchik on 19-21 May 1991. The Congress was attended by representatives of the *Adige Xase* in Kabardino-Balkaria, Adyghea and the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, by delegates from the Abkhaz Popular Movement, the Motherland Association<sup>309</sup>, and by envoys from the Circassian associations and cultural centers in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Germany, the Netherlands, and the

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308. The National Forum *Aidgylara* (Abkhazian: Аидгылара, Unity) is a socio-political movement in Abkhazia. It was founded during Perestroika as the ethno-nationalist movement representing the Abkhaz people. *Aidgylara*'s founding congress took place on 13 December 1988 in the building of the Abkhazian State Philharmonic Orchestra, where the writer Alexey Gogua was elected its first Chairman.

309. Rodina or Xekw



USA. One of the principal resolutions of the Congress was the establishment of *Duneypso Sherjes Xase*, the International Circassian Association (ICA).

In May 1991 in Nalchik, Circassians set up the ICA, a cross-border association that united the main Circassian organizations of the Caucasus, Turkey, Europe, the United States, Syria, and Jordan. Its first president was Yuri Kalmykov, who was appointed Russia's minister of justice in 1993. The ICA became a strong centrist movement that operated at the international level, joining the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in 1994 (Zhemukhov, 2012: p.509). The ICA emerged as the authentic national movement of the Circassians, exhibiting the features that have historically characterized such movements: defining, promoting, and protecting Circassian national identity. It wielded considerable influence during the war in Abkhazia in 1992–1993 and in Karachay-Cherkess during the political struggle of 1998–1999 between the Karachay-Turks and Circassians. Since the early 2000s, the ICA leaders, dominated by the pro-Moscow Kabardian elite, have repeatedly stated that they do not want to become engaged in politics, only in cultural and linguistic matters that affect Circassian communities (Besleney, 2010).

With the Circassian question remaining on the political agenda of all Circassians and of the Russian officials, the battle over setting the agenda for the future of the ICA will only intensify, as control over the organization is the one means of accessing and controlling the powerful Circassian diaspora (Dzutsati, 2015).

In general, Circassian movements and organizations have mainly been oriented toward the local authorities in their home republics. In December 2010, eighteen Circassian organizations from the Russian Federation set up a joint Circassian Council to present a united front on key issues, such as the Sochi Winter Olympics and recognition of the nineteenth-century genocide. The Circassian Council poses a challenge to the ICA, which most Circassians in both the homeland and the diaspora now view as an extension of the Kremlin. The ICA has been accused of suppressing Circassian issues instead of supporting them, of having a culturalist and folkloric stance with regard to Circassian demands, and of acting as an instrument of control on behalf of the Kremlin authorities (Hansen, 2012: p. 110; Besleney, 2010). However, it is a difficult task to establish new initiatives in Russia to promote Circassian cultural and political demands as well as other demands made by civil society. The Circassian Congress of the Adyghea Republic is another popular movement that emerged in Maykop in 2005 to oppose the Kremlin's efforts to merge Adyghea into Krasnodar Krai. The Circassian Congress, under the leadership of Murat Berzeg, established contacts with many other Circassian organizations, initiated the creation of similar

congresses in the homeland and the diaspora, and persuaded them to defend the status of the republic and support President Khazret Sovmen.

The movement did not have a united structure, but the Circassian Congress in Maykop was recognized as its main ideological force. On July 1, 2005, Murad Berzeg appealed to the Russian State Duma to recognize the Circassian genocide. Murat Berzeg collected more than five hundred documents in support of the appeal: evidence of cruelties committed by the political and military leaders of the Russian Empire and detailed descriptions of the mass demolition of Circassian settlements and the extermination of peaceful people. The Russian Duma turned down the request, and Berzeg's petition brought him nothing but threats and harassment (Newsweek, 2012; Zhemukhov, 2012). The organizations did not do much better with the European Parliament. Twenty Circassian organizations from nine countries signed a petition to the president of the Parliament, Josep Borrell Fontelles, on October 11, 2006, asking that the Circassian genocide is recognized. Two years later, the Circassian Congress of Maykop repeated the request to the next president, Hans-Gert Pottering. Neither request received a reply (Zhemukhov, 2012: pp. 510-512). Local and federal authorities often reject the new Circassian initiatives, using cold war terminology to portray the petitioners as "nationalists", "foreign agents," and "agents of the opposition" (Pirani, 2010: p. 110). The intelligence services monitor leading members and activists of various civil society organizations, and several Circassian activists and journalists have been forced to leave the North Caucasus to escape harassment, threats, and beatings (Hansen, 2012: p. 111).

#### **4.8 The emergence of National Movements & Policy of "Return to Homeland"**

In the early years of the Russian Federation, it was primarily the structural legacy of the Soviet Union's territorial administration policies that determined the nature of the conflict over political power and access to resources in the North Caucasus. During this period, interlinked tensions and conflicts spread across the region, driven primarily by ethnonational issues. The federal government faced increasing demands for territorial change and structural reform in the North Caucasus, often reflecting disputes created by the repeated border changes and the deportations of the 1940s. Accompanying this was a crisis of leadership at the regional level and in the relationship between the North Caucasus republics and the federal authorities. In the early 1990s, Boris Yeltsin's appeal to Russia's regional leaders to 'take all the sovereignty they could swallow' accelerated nationalist mobilization in the North Caucasus. The subsequent wave of declarations of sovereignty and national movements by autonomous republics, oblasts, and districts reached the North Caucasus,

where it was led by republics such as Chechnya, which proclaimed its independence in November 1991 (Kahn, 2002: p. 36).

Furthermore, in 1991 the Russian Parliament passed the Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples, which moved the issue of the return of land to former deportees to the top of the political agendas of the North Caucasus republics and the neighboring Russian territories. This law was viewed by many as providing a justification for redrawing the borders and redefining the status of many of the administrative units in the North Caucasus. Also, Yeltsin's support for the revival of the Cossacks, who had also been repressed during the Soviet era, within the scope of the Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples provoked tensions between the Russian and non-Russian communities of the region. The Cossacks had a history of conflict with the native peoples of the North Caucasus specifically with Circassians. Calls for ethnic sovereignty stimulated by this law threatened to split Kabardin-Balkar ASSR, formed from two ethnic territories. As mentioned earlier, almost the entire Balkar population had been deported by Stalin and their name removed from the name of the republic in 1944. After their return in 1957, disputes over land and the character of the republic were never far from the surface. In 1992, the Balkars voted for secession from Kabardin-Balkar.

While the push for separation failed to gain support from Russia and faced strong resistance from among the Kabardians, subsequent Balkar congresses throughout the 1990s repeated the call for the building of a Balkar republic and stimulated tensions that continue today. Russia failed to respond to the conflicts over territory in the country, including the North Caucasus, with a coherent policy. Instead, relations between Moscow and the regions were confused by conflicting pieces of legislation on the distribution of authority between the center and the regions: the 1992 Federal Treaty, the 1993 Russian Constitution, and a set of bilateral treaties between Russia and the individual regions. There was also considerable institutional ambiguity in Russia, with an uncertain division of responsibility for policy towards the North Caucasus between different ministries, the parliament, the presidential apparatus, and security agencies. With no definitive legal base for federal relations and lacking a well-organized institutional arrangement, Russia resorted to improvisation and ad hoc solutions to address the conflicts in the North Caucasus. The difficulty that Russia faced in formulating a coherent response to the conflicts in the North Caucasus was a reflection of a deeper challenge regarding what kind of state the new Russian Federation should become. At a philosophical level, this battle was fought out between two main positions: the federalist position that the creation of Russia as a genuine federation was a vital part of the

development of the country as a modern and democratic country; and the statist argument that the creation of a strong, centralized state was essential to ensure Russia's territorial integrity and was a precondition for the country's re-emergence on the world stage as a great power. So the national movements in the north Caucasus become pervasive and a new political trend.

Another issue was immigration to the homeland among Diasporas. It was only during the perestroika period, when access to the origin lands became easier, that "return" and the possibility of reuniting in the homeland turned into a reality. With increased communication, people in the diaspora started to learn about the social, political, and economic conditions in the homeland. Knowledge started to materialize the homeland in people's minds, transforming imagination into reality, since the homeland was just a mythical story before the 1970s. Due to these changes, the last generation of the diaspora grew up in an environment of ethnocultural revival and had a clearer understanding of the political dynamics, territorial divisions, demographic situation, and sociocultural values in the Caucasus (Doğan 2009; Kaya 2004; Shami, 1998). It was also during these last decades that many people started to visit their homeland; some, with considerable personal effort, return-migrated.

In fact, although return was widely discussed in the diaspora and argued by some as the sole way for true existence of the Circassian people and culture, the notion of return kept only an ideal and did not materialize into definite migration. Visits demonstrated that everyday life in the homeland was very different from the nostalgic expectations that were created in the diaspora. Still, there were some people who settled in Circassian lands in the early 1990s. However, economic stagnation in the next five years in Circassia, which was experiencing economic crisis due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which was put under a severe embargo by the Commonwealth of the Independent States and the international community, resulted in many returnees going back to the countries where they were born. Nevertheless, many of them stayed in contact with the homeland through family connections, neighbors, and friends and some resettled in the homeland again later. The return migration of the diaspora has gained speed after 2009, mainly as a result of political changes in the Caucasus (Erciyes, 2014).

Despite increased and cheaper transportation to the region, Circassia has introduced quotas for the settlement of "foreigners", including the ethnic descendants of the native people of the Caucasus, because of the imposition of Russian Federation regulations. These political pressures created fear in the diaspora that, in a near future, there would not even be

an opportunity to make regular visits to the homeland. Many in the diaspora and the returnees established their new post-perestroika existence through constant back-and-forth movement, some becoming trans-migrants and settling in two or more localities, as other studies on the return of diasporas have found (Tsuda, 2009; Vertovec, 2001).

As Shami argues in her study about Circassian returnees, there were differences in the experience of returnees depending on the country where they had been born, as there was no “homogeneous, unified conception of Circassian identity . . . in any locality prior to the encounter with the homeland” (1998: p. 628). In this sense, there were also differences among the returnees from Turkey: depending on the region they had come from in Turkey, they had gone through a different sociopolitical diasporization (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998: p. 27). Hence, a majority of the returnees maintained a collective diasporic identity and belonging to their respective diaspora communities, either through the associations they were members of in the urban locations in Turkey or through constant contact with their close-knit ethnic rural communities (Erciyes, 2008: pp. 343-346).

Actually, after the collapse of Soviet Union, the Circassian homeland has become directly accessible to the communities outside, although in Jordan and Syria a trickle of students had been going to study in the Caucasus since the 1970s and a series of official visits were taking place between officials of the Soviet republics, folklore groups, and leaders of Circassian organizations. Since 1989, however, large numbers of Circassians from all the countries they were living in, have been going to the Caucasus, usually during the summers, to visit, to find long-lost relatives and home villages.

To emphasize the ‘suddenness’ and disconcerting effect of such encounters is not to imply that a homogeneous, unified conception of Circassian identity existed in any locality prior to the encounter with the homeland. However, new and unexpected disjuncture has emerged that lead to a new questioning of identity and was a new stage of Circassian Question (Shami, 1998: pp. 627-631). Anyway, despite many problems, it was a policy supported by local governments and national movements. Even among Diaspora, the political elite of the Circassians had started defining themselves as a diaspora and referring to their “huge numbers” dispersed in different nation-states away from their homeland, in the 1990s. They continue to “construct and disseminate numerous representations of what they are, what their diasporic experience feels like and what it means or should mean” (Tölölyan, 2003: p. 56).



## 5 Chapter - Contemporary Political Influences on Circassian Question

### 5.1 Introduction

In recent years, due to some contemporary political influences on the Circassian Question, the public figure can have more feelings and understand this issue. I mean nowadays mostly regional policy of neighbors and other regional players' influences on Circassia is much more obvious than Soviet Era. For example, the conflict between the West and Russia and official Russian policy toward the Circassians have a fundamental role in the account of understanding the Circassian Question. Some famous regional phenomena such as the Russian – Chechen War and Russian – Georgian War, have influenced on this issue. The key point of emerging the Circassian Question in recent years, without doubt, was 2014 Winter Olympics of Sochi while we witnessed a change in the policies of other regional and transnational actors such as *Turkey*, *Georgian*, the *EU*, and others.

It should be noted that the 2014 Sochi Olympics coincided with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian conquest of Sochi. At the opening ceremony, a performance showed narrating the Russian thousand-year history without mentioning anything about the Circassians, the indigenous people of the game place. The failure of Sochi, the last capital of Circassia, was the final struggle in the Russo-Circassian War. That historical fact still hassles the Circassians in Russia and the diaspora. Hence, the Formation of the Circassian Genocide as an International Historical Issue & Mourning Day is begun to be internationalized.

Another important factor that I will survey in this chapter will be the relation between Diaspora and Homeland. In previous chapters, I drew your attention about Circassia as a Homeland and the feeling of Circassians toward their Homeland. However, I will mostly focus on the contemporary activities of Diaspora. Actually, nowadays we see a new and significant type of unity and coordinated action has appeared among Circassian identity across the three republics in the North Caucasus where Circassians constitute titular-nationalities. New Circassian organizations and internet media have been established and have managed to involve many Circassians in their activities especially since the mid of the 2000s. The arrival and spread of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have contributed to the increased involvement and visibility of Circassians in the North Caucasus.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the ongoing Circassian mobilization, as represented by the actions of contemporary political influences specifically of external factors. All these policies represent a new type of unity compared to earlier periods when the Circassian identity mainly operated within their own republics and in relation to the local Republican power structures. Both the internal and the federal officials have mostly reacted with animosity to the institutions and many of their plans have been ignored and rejected, in different forms of harm including acute whipping and threatening against their family.

## **5.2 Disputes between West & Russia**

There is a lot of theories explain a new shape of ‘Cold War’ a comparison of nowadays tensions to the perspective and armed competition that had existed between the Soviet Union and the Western allies from the 1950s till 1980s. But I think such comparisons may be misleading the concept of understanding this ongoing silent conflict. Maybe today’s rivalry is not the result of a balance of power or global ideology, but conscious decisions made by political leaders, the tactics they followed and a field of determinable disagreements in international politics and these were not ordained or unavoidable. Russian debility actually in the 1990s, meant that it was still accommodating to cooperation with Western players in order to hamper the increase of crisis and further destabilization of the emerging neighbors. However, from the Russian perspective, the pattern shifted in the 2000s to the competition for regional influences with the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO), the United States and the European Union. This rivalry continued over the Russia-Georgia war in 2008 to escalate through the outbreak of the crisis over Ukraine in early 2014 (Fischer, 2016: p. 6).

It is increasingly clear that Russia too for that matter, have not underwritten, and do not subscribe to, the liberal underpinnings of the *post-Cold War* order. Moreover, there is no way for the West to impose its will on these powers. Nevertheless, many commentators say the West too has some responsibility for the current situation and playing up the new Cold War idea may only make matters worse. Indeed, after a period of internal balancing, military reforms and modernization, Russia is more than authoritative of keeping ground in its historic backyard, planning power to other neighboring regions and as can be seen, attaining to demand retribution on remote enemies through non-military methods. In *NATO* countries, there is much talk about spending more on defense and of gearing up again to fight what is called a peer competitor (Marcus, 2018).



It should consider that April 2018 saw the lowest point in Russia's relations with the West since the early 1980's – as embodied in three events. On 6 April, the US imposed new, tougher, economic sanctions on Russia, battering the Rubel and other economic indicators. On 12 April, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirmed that the nerve agent used in the attack on *Sergei Skripal*<sup>310</sup> was of Russian plan, thus in effect accusing Russia in the attack and accrediting the expulsion of over a hundred Russian diplomats from effectively all Western capitals. These daily occurrences graphically highlighted how far Russo-Western relationships have taken down in recent years. Ukraine was among this encounter between Russia and West, which directly led to the Russian capture of Crimea and support for the war in the Donbass.

Meanwhile, Russia has launched cyber attacks in Ukraine and elsewhere, interfered via social media in Western elections, and attempted to murder ex-Russian spy Skripal on the streets of Salisbury. Both the US and Russia have now announced the modernization of their nuclear arsenals (Brenton, 2018).

Therefore, I think that the conflict between the West and Russia will be united. Perhaps this alone will not have any effect on the 'Circassian Question' but can be used as a lever against Russia in the long run. This question requires their quarreling efforts and the power of their civil society, which will make the Circassian Question more and more global issue and win benefits among the disputes between Russia and the West.

### **5.3 Russian Policy**

Russian conquest of the North Caucasus took place in the context of the rising power's rivalry with Persian and Ottoman Empires and growing concern about the interests of European states in the region. The strong geopolitical basis of Russia's engagement with the North Caucasus and the long process of conquest and incorporation resulted in a complex set of policies being applied towards the North Caucasus and its peoples. As an outcome, several communities in the North Caucasus have had distinguished relationships with the central state over the past 200 years. As it mentioned earlier, while some groups were incorporated relatively peacefully, others put up a sustained resistance, leading to widespread

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310. Sergei Viktorovich Skripal in Russian: Серге́й Ви́кторович Скрипаль, is a former Russian military intelligence officer who acted as a double agent for the UK's intelligence services during the 1990s and early 2000s. In December 2004, he was arrested by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) and later tried, convicted of high treason, and sentenced to 13 years in prison. He settled in the UK in 2010 following the Illegals Program spy swap.

violence and the mobilization and consolidation, for political purposes, of local identities as part of the struggle (Broxup, 1992: chapters 2–4; Melvin, 2007).

Nowadays, Russia updated its main security and strategic documents: the *Military Doctrine* in 2014, the National Security Strategy in 2015 and the Foreign Policy Concept in 2016. The three new strategic documents replaced earlier versions, marking a shift from *Dmitriy Medvedev*'s presidency (2008–2012) (Hedenskog & others, 2016: p. 98). Its contents have not been possible to analyze and it will not be discussed further here. Neither the Strategy nor the Doctrine explicitly mentions the Caucasus region or any of the North Caucasus republics. However, they both mention Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Strategy singles them out as key areas of Russian foreign policy. The Doctrine stresses the interaction with these entities in order to ensure joint defense and security<sup>311</sup>. It is hard to find Russian policy toward the north Caucasus and Circassia in particular. Therefore, we should aware about the concept of Russian policy toward other regions and through it we can realize it better.

In the notion, the first preferences of Russian foreign policy are all self-giving to developing Russian bilateral and multilateral collaboration in the post-Soviet era within institutions such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Union State of Belarus and Russia . Of the Caucasian states, only Armenia is a member of all the three organizations (the CIS, EAEU, and CSTO), Azerbaijan is a member of the CIS only and Georgia is not a member of any. In bilateral relations, the Concept also gives high priority to helping the creating of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as modern democratic states, fortifying their international positions, and ensuring trustworthy security and socioeconomic recovery, further, clearing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by working together with the other internal and external States that are co-chairs in the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The sense also sets out Russian interest in normalizing relations with Georgia in areas where the Georgian side is willing to do the same, with due attention for the current political sphere in the South Caucasus.

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311. You can refer to National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (2015) – Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsiiot 31.12.2015 g. No 683 “O Strategii Natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rosssiiskoi Federatsii”, 31 December (Online access: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391>); and Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (2014), Voennaia Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii (utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiiskoi Federatsii 25 Dekabria 2014 g. No Pr-2976) (Online Access: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/security/military/-document129/>).

The three strategic documents are all anti-Western and blame the West for turbulence in the international system. According to the Strategy, for instance, instability in global development has increased and Russia's independent foreign and domestic policy has led the US and its allies to reveal their political, economic, military and informational pressure on Russia. Furthermore, the Strategy notes that the West's goal of counteracting the integration processes in Eurasia has a negative impact on Russia's national security. The US and EU are pointed out as responsible for developments in Ukraine by having supported an "anti-constitutional coup" that led to "deep divisions in Ukrainian society and the emergence of armed conflict"<sup>312</sup>. Thus, in addition to describing the US and NATO in a negative light, which previous documents also did, the Strategy also points to the EU as hostile to Russia.

The three documents challenge the Euro-Atlantic security order. They accuse the West of double standards. The Strategy claims that the current international security system does not provide security for all states. Furthermore, in the increasingly unstable world order, "some countries use information and communication technologies to achieve their geopolitical objectives, such as the manipulation of public opinion and falsification of history", including inciting "color revolutions". This is a clear reference to the US and the West. Furthermore, the Strategy points to NATO expansion and its approach to the borders of Russia as "a threat to Russia's national security" (Hedenskog & others, 2016: pp. 116-117). Furthermore, the Foreign Policy Concept mentions the eroding of the "global economic and political dominance of the traditional western powers". On the one hand, the vacuum in the international order created by the fading of the West has been filled by extremist groups such as the Islamic State. The Western withdrawal from Afghanistan "of all but a few international contingents" also poses a security threat to Russia and the other members of the CIS in Central Asia. On the other hand, the West's weakness also opens opportunities for Russia<sup>313</sup>. The Concept implies that Russia, being "a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state with a track record of harmonious coexistence among various peoples", is more capable of acting as an intermediary in resolving international conflicts<sup>314</sup>. The Concept seems to imply that Russia can transform its own internal experience in defusing threats posed by extremism and fundamentalism in the North Caucasus as an asset in international conflict resolution.

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312. National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (2015), p. 17.

313. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2016), p. 97.

314. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2016), p. 38.

According to these strategies, the Chechen war has had a deep and strike on Caucasian life in Russia. The conflict caused an unexampled wave of xenophobia in Russia and anti-Caucasian sensation has been flourishing since 1994. The war in Chechen continues to be the main politically outfitting matter in Russian society, which clarifying why Putin's administration pays continual consideration to the North Caucasus. Another important indirect result of the war has been the emergence of the Russian project for reforming regional administration. The conflict has given a certain moral legitimacy to this plan by providing as its basis the reasoning of separatism idea and terrorism in the whole region (Pain, 2011).

Therefore, it seems that Russian attitudes toward the North Caucasus are in constant flux. The irritation is carefully channeled by the Russian media and is likely being fueled by the Russian security services to keep the authority governors at bay for now and eventually to perhaps oust them. More generally, the central government's ability to finance the North Caucasus appear to be further declining, and Moscow is preparing procedures and structures such as the National Guard for keeping the region under its control when the money runs out. Without further subsidies, military force will remain the Russian state only remaining argument in favor of holding the region and the rest of the country together (Dzutsati, 2016).

### **5.3.1 Caucasus importance for Russia**

The North Caucasus region, itself is important to Russia for at least five simple reasons that I mentioned sporadically in the previous chapters, but summarily I say again here. First, the region is of great geo-strategic importance in linking the European continent with the Middle East and the Black Sea with the Caspian Sea.

Second, the region is the scene of unresolved conflicts that hold a potential for escalation. The conflict over the North Caucasus, in particular, has been highlighted since the 1990s. Third, as noted above, the Caucasus is still perceived by Moscow as a matter of rivalry between Russia and the West. Fourth, the Caucasus is also important for its diversity of ethnic groups. There are more than 50 ethnic groups living in the region, many with their own unique language, culture, and traditions. This mosaic of ethnic groups, especially in the North Caucasus, has been a cause of unrest and political commotion throughout history, from the Russian conquest of the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For Moscow, the predominantly Muslim peoples in the North Caucasus republics represent a challenge to Russian policies that increasingly emphasize Orthodox Christianity despite Russia formally having four official religions, one of which is Islam (Blank and Younkyoo, 2016: p. 197).

The ethnic mosaic of the North Caucasus is a factor connecting the area to the South Caucasus, and this factor increases Russia's interest in dominating the South Caucasus as well. A potential war in the South Caucasus would risk spreading to the North as some of the peoples live on both sides of the Greater Caucasus mountain range. Therefore, for Russia, an old saying goes that "he who wishes to control the North Caucasus must also control the South" (Sherr, 2017: p. 52). Fifth, the region's proximity to the Middle East and the recent wars in Syria and Iraq play an increasingly important role in the Caucasus. The key dynamic is Islamist extremism. Russia has been fighting Islamist extremism in the North Caucasus since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since 2014, when the Islamic State (IS) declared the Caucasus as a priority region and sphere of interest, the issue of Jihadi warriors going from the Caucasus to fight in the Middle East and, presumably, returning to continue the fight in their own neighborhood has been added to the agenda both in Russia and in the South Caucasus (Markedonov, 2015). All of this importance for Russia means that Circassia itself is regional key among Russian sphere and all can effect on the Circassian Question directly.

#### **5.4 Russian – Chechen War**

One of the reasons that this controversy is presented in contemporary factors is the historical role among Circassians and Chechens since the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Maybe this is not my research, but I will first look at the military conflicts between Chechnya and Russia. Actually, the first Chechen war, from 1994 to 1996, affected all aspects of life in the North Caucasus and further poisoned Russia's relationship with the region, not least because it ended in a humiliating defeat for the Russian forces. While the first war in Chechnya (1994–96) was driven by the secular Chechen elites' secessionism, the second war (1999–2000) was more driven by Islamist motives (Mozzhukhin, 2015). Beyond the immediate casualties of the conflict, the war played a central role in the growth of authoritarian politics in the region and in Moscow, the rise of radical Islam, the spread of corruption and criminality, and the accelerated social and economic decline of the region. Most researchers believe that the first Chechen war was thus instrumental in the rise to power of Vladimir Putin and the emergence of his centralizing agenda. The first of the major events leading up to the war was the seizure of power by force in the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist

Republic<sup>315</sup> (Map. 31) by nationalist politician Dzhokhar Dudayev<sup>316</sup> in 1991 (Figure. 21). Dudayev held an election in October to confirm his presidency and then proclaimed the independent Chechen Republic<sup>317</sup>, although it has never been recognized by Russia or the international community. Dudayev was able to draw on nationalist sentiment that had been building up in the late 1980s. There was fighting between Chechens and Ingush along the border between the Chechen and Ingush territories, which stopped only after the federal authorities sent troops to the area. In June 1992, Chechnya and Ingushetia were formally separated when the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation passed the Law on the Formation of the Ingush Republic. In April 1993 Dudayev dissolved the Chechen parliament and Chechnya descended into lawlessness and chaos. Bitter infighting broke out, reflecting its complex social make-up. In December 1994, federal troops were sent in to restore the federal government's authority in the republic, sparking the first Chechen war. Conditions quickly deteriorated as both sides became locked in a cycle of violence that led to the death of thousands of civilians and the commission of war crimes by both sides.

At the beginning of this war was a kind of nationalism afford but during and after the war, a small but determined group of international jihadi fighters were drawn to Chechnya under the leadership of an Arab, Amir Khattab<sup>318</sup> (Figure. 22). Local leaders such as Shamil Basayev<sup>319</sup> (Figure. 23), Arbi Barayev and Movladi Udugov allied themselves with this group and began to look to the international Islamist movement for support. As a result, the war began to shift from its initially nationalist agenda towards more Islamist aims. Finally, Dudayev was killed by a Russian missile attack in April 1996. In May President Yeltsin traveled to Chechnya and invited Dudayev's successor, *Zelimkhan Yanderbiev*, to the Kremlin. In June Chechen and Russian negotiators concluded an agreement in Nazran, Ingushetia, on a Russian troop withdrawal from Chechnya. After the June 1996 Russian presidential elections, the Nazran agreement was de facto annulled and Russia renewed its military campaign under *General Alexander Lebed*, who had been appointed national

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315. Chechen-Ingush ASSR was an autonomous republic within the Russian SFSR. Its capital was Grozny.

316. Dzhokhar Musayevich Dudayev (1944 – 21 April 1996) was a Soviet Air Force general and Chechen leader, the first President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, a breakaway state in the North Caucasus.

317. Ichkeria

318. Samir Saleh Abdullah (1969 – 20 March 2002), more commonly known as Ibn al-Khattab or Emir Khattab, was a Saudi Arabian-born leader in the First Chechen War and the Second Chechen War.

319. Shamil Salmanovich Basayev (1965 – 10 July 2006) was a Chechen General militant Islamist and a leader of the Chechen movement.

security adviser by the re-elected President Yeltsin and also Russia gave its support to Aslan Maskhadov, a relative moderate among the separatist leaders, who won with 60 percent of the vote (Trenin & Malashenko, 2004: p. 30). However, the Islamist guerrilla leader Shamil Basayev won 20 percent of the vote and became prime minister. The tensions between Maskhadov and Basayev were particularly destabilizing and intensified into a struggle for power. The two men disagreed about relations with the federal government and the nature of the emerging Chechen state (Melvin, 2007).

Many experts argue that the transition to jihad happened under the pressure of the Russian army. Terrorism is the last resort of the weak side in resistance to the overwhelming force of an enemy. The influence of Al Qaeda and the Wahhabist movement sponsored from the Middle East was also arguably present in Chechnya. Some writers, mostly journalists, view this transformation to religion as a plot of Russian intelligence. Former Russian defected intelligence officer Alexander Litvinenko even accused the FSB (Russian secret agency) of conspiring and organizing the explosions of residential apartments in Russian cities in 1999, which was used as a reason for the second invasion of Chechnya. The book which he co-authored with Yuri Felshtinsky describes the actions of Russian intelligence behind the terrorist attacks on Russian cities in 1999 (Feltshinsky & Litvinenko, 2007).

Actually, the question of the relationship of Islam to the Chechen or even North Caucasus was especially sensitive and led to clashes between followers of traditional and fundamentalist Islam from the mid of the 1990s. Radicals, led by Basayev, used this issue to challenge the legitimacy of Maskhadov's leadership. From 1998, collisions between competing groups in Chechnya escalated. Maskhadov tried to consolidate his position, appealing to the Chechen people and using contacts with the federal government and with other North Caucasus leaders, while the radicals looked for support from local opposition forces and called for Islamization of the North Caucasus. In February 1999, Maskhadov introduced *sharia* law and a *shura*<sup>320</sup> primarily in order to challenge the radicals' monopoly over Islam. Dagestan became a key issue in the struggle for power in Chechnya. Basing their argument in large part on historical claims, radicals argued that Dagestan should be merged with Chechnya to form a single Islamic state (Souleimanov, 2005). The federal government also claimed that local terrorist activity was supported with financing and arms from international Islamic militant groups, including al-Qaeda. The new Russian Prime Minister,

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320. Islamic council

Vladimir Putin, ordered Russian forces back into Chechnya, thereby launching the second Chechen war.

It should be considered that since 2001 Moscow has adopted a policy of Chechenization in order to pacify the Chechen Republic. Under this policy, pro-Moscow leaders<sup>321</sup> have been elected in elections organized and controlled by Russia. The aim of the Chechenization policy has been to let regional authorities in Chechnya, rather than Moscow, become responsible for fighting insurgents. A symbolic culmination of this process was the ending of Russia's anti-terrorist operation in the republic in March 2009 (Falkowski, 2015: pp. 06-10; Laruelle, 2017: pp. 20-21).

In fact, on 15 April 2009, the government operation in Chechnya was officially over (BBC News, 2009). As the main mass of the army was introverted, the charge of dealing with the continuous low-level revolt mainly fell on the shoulders of the local police force. Three months later the exiled leader of the separatist, *Akhmed Zakayev*<sup>322</sup>, called for a stand to armed resister against the Chechen police force beginning from 1 August and said he hoped that starting with this day Chechens will never shoot at each other (Russia Today, 2009).

These two wars also have had a major effect on the demographic situation in the North Caucasus, in turn generating economic and social consequences. Migration in the region, both forced and voluntary, has fundamentally altered the ethnic composition of most republics and territories. Furthermore, *Mark Kramer* (2005b: p. 261) has identified a number of undermining activities tied to the war, namely "the ascendance of Islamic extremist elements in the North Caucasus, the rise of other radical groups in Circassia: Kabardin-Balkar and Karachay-Cherkess". I cannot bring tangible and sensible evidence of the direct connection of the Chechens with the Circassians at this historic moment, but no doubt, the Chechen war had reminded Circassians 'the Caucasus war of 19<sup>th</sup> century' when the historical sympathy of the Circassians was obvious and the significant impact of the Chechen conflict on the Circassian Question was inevitable.

## 5.5 Russian – Georgian War

Tensions between Georgia and its two separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, could escalate into a confrontation that Russia's two military bases are unable to handle.

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321. First Ahmad Kadyrov and, from 2007, his son Ramzan Kadyrov

322. Akhmed Halidovich Zakayev is a former Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister of the unrecognized Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI).



Russian forces have been present in various forms in Abkhazia and South Ossetia since the early 1990s. The Russo-Georgian War was a war between Georgia, Russia and the Russian-supported self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The final war took place in August 2008 following a period of worsening relations between Russia and Georgia, both formerly constituent republics of the Soviet Union (Emerson, 2008).

But historically, the Republic of Georgia declared its independence in early 1991 as the Soviet Union began to fall apart. Among this background, a war between Georgia and separatists left parts of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast under the de facto control of Russian-backed. Following the war, a joint peacekeeping force of Georgian, Russian, and Ossetian troops was planted in the border of territory. Meantime, a similar impasse developed in Abkhazia. Following Putin's rise to power in Russia in 2000 and a pro-Western change of power in Georgia in 2003, relations between Russia and Georgia began to decline, reaching a full diplomatic crisis by April 2008. By 1 August 2008, South Ossetian separatists began hulling Georgian villages, with an irregular response from Georgian peacekeepers (Harding, 2008).

Then Russian troops had lawlessly crossed the Russo-Georgian border and entered into the South Ossetian territory by 7 August before the Georgian military response (Roudik, 2008). Russia arraigned for Georgia of hostility against South Ossetia and started a large-scale land, air and sea invasion of Georgia on 8 August with the excuse of the peace implement operation (Allison, 2008: pp. 1146-1149) (Map. 32). Officially, the French presidency of the European Union, in the person of Nicolas Sarkozy, negotiated a ceasefire agreement on 12 August. After 2008 until 2014, totally Georgian policy changed toward the North Caucasians and it made them get closer to Circassians.

The 2008 war was the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union that the Russian military had been used against another state, displaying Russia's inclination to wage a full-scale military campaign to gain its political objectives (Kaas, 2009). The failure of the Western security organizations to react swiftly to Russia's attempt to violently revise the borders of an OSCE country revealed its deficiencies. The division between Western European and Eastern European nations also became apparent over the relationship with Russia. Ukraine and other ex-Soviet countries received a clear message from the Russian leadership that the possible accession to NATO would cause a foreign incursion and the break-up of the country. The effective takeover of Abkhazia was also one of Russia's geopolitical goals (Rahman, 2009: pp. 132-146).

Since 2014, Moscow has clearly stepped up its influence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This suits South Ossetia's desire for unification with Russia, which Moscow is currently unwilling to grant. In 2017 South Ossetia renamed itself the 'Republic of South Ossetia', a symbolic step towards reunification with the Russian republic North Ossetia-Alania (OC Media, 2017) (Map. 33). Abkhazia remains more skeptical about Moscow's dominance, although the change in government in Sukhumi in 2014 put Moscow in a better position to assert its interests in Sukhumi as well. Moscow has also sought to cement its influence in Georgia's secessionist territories through formal agreements. In 2014, Moscow sought closer ties with Abkhazia through the Treaty of Alliance and Strategic Partnership and in 2015 with South Ossetia through the Treaty of Alliance and Integration. Taking Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's political, economic and military integration to a point just short of annexation was a symbolic response to Georgia's EU association process (Fischer, 2016: p. 60). Annexing Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as it did with Crimea, would, however, deprive Moscow of a lever of influence that could still be useful in the relationship with Tbilisi. South Ossetia, in particular, remains completely dependent on Russia. One of the principal issues discussed at several rounds of the Geneva International Discussions is the commitment to the non-use of force. Georgia made a unilateral pledge of non-use of force in November 2010 and has since insisted that Russia should do the same. The Russian government refuses to follow suit, alleging that it is not a party to the conflict. Instead, it wants Georgia to sign treaties envisaging non-use of force directly with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Tbilisi refuses to do on account of the entities being part of Georgia as a sovereign state. Russia has also regularly expressed its concerns over Georgia's relations with NATO and military cooperation with the US (Civil Georgia, 2015; Hedenskog, 2018).

### **5.5.1 Georgian Policy**

Accordingly, Georgia developed a policy toward the North Caucasus, explained by some analysts as a policy of parallelism. Its purpose was to intensify endeavors to engage with the North Caucasus more profitably while trying to encourage an anti-Russian separatist movement there. The broader notion behind this apparently negative idea was the revival of Georgia's leading role in the region, with Tbilisi as a political and intellectual center for the *Iberian-Caucasian* nations (Zhemukhov, 2010).

It should also be said that the current concept is not the first, but rather the latest step by the Georgian authorities in relation to the North Caucasus. Strange as it may seem, until now

there has been no conceptual backing for the policies which Georgia has pursued with enviable consistency since 2009 directly as a result of the 2008 war.

In January 2010, a new Georgian channel called 'First Caucasus' was established to have the north Caucasian audiences, specifically among Circassians. *Zhemukhov* (2010) says: "The main purpose of the channel was, as reported by the Russian daily *Kommersant*, to supply the Russians, and especially the North Caucasians, with true information about events in Georgia and the North Caucasus. In February 2010, the Georgian parliament established a Group of Friendship and Cooperation with the parliaments of the North Caucasian republics. The Georgian parliament called on the North Caucasian parliaments to work jointly to develop Caucasian civilization and to preserve the historical and friendly ties between the nations of the Caucasus in spite of the deterioration of political relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation. These initial steps did not have much impact in the North Caucasus because of the response from the Russian side: the television channel, while available on the internet, was ultimately not broadcast by the French company Eutelsat allegedly under pressure from Russia, and the parliaments of the North Caucasian republics never responded to the appeal. It was the next step in Georgia's policy toward engagement with the Circassian Question that proved the most successful, setting off what one observer dubbed the war of conferences. Within the tangled web of Georgian-Abkhaz-Russian relations, the Circassian question has something to offer Georgia. Not only does it buttress Georgia's support from the international community, which has already promised not to recognize the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It also gives Georgia an ally against Russia, even if it is a weak and stateless one within Russia itself".

Main afford of Georgian policy was on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011, when the Georgian parliament passed a Resolution on the recognition of genocide of Circassians by the Russian Empire which contained the following wording: 1. Recognizes the mass murder of Circassians during the Caucasus War, and their forceful eviction from their historic homeland, as an act of genocide in accordance with Section IV of the Hague Convention on Laws and Customs of War on Land on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1907 and the Union Nationa Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1948. 2. Recognizes the Circassians, forcefully deported during and after the period of the Russo-Caucasus war, as refugees, in line with the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees of 28<sup>th</sup> July 1951<sup>323</sup>.

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323. See more detail: [http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=63&info\\_id=31806](http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=63&info_id=31806).

Based on the response of the Circassian, Georgia's image as perceived by them does appear to have improved acutely following the recognition of the Circassian Genocide. Tbilisi endeavored to build on this success by using the 'genocide' card and keeping it afloat for the Winter Olympics Sochi (Khashig, 2011).

Inal-Ipa (2012) in his work for Abkhaz World says: "Georgia's active policy towards the Circassians will clearly contribute negatively to Abkhaz-Circassian relations. The Abkhaz take a jaundiced view of this since, in the absence of a resolution of the conflict, any improvement in relations between the republics of the North Caucasus and Georgia is seen by them as an attempt to undermine the Circassian-Abkhaz brotherhood formed during their joint struggle against the Georgians. The position of the Abkhaz is met by blank incomprehension by some in the Circassian community. We should note here that the position adopted by Abkhazia on this does not mean it is entirely uncritical of the dramatic aspects of the Caucasus' past and present. On the contrary, criticism of Russia's Caucasian policy is commonly heard in Abkhaz public discourse".

As it mentioned, Moscow tends to view this resolution by the official administration in Tbilisi as revenge for the 2008 war and its own recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In fact, a number of actions taken by Georgia since then demonstrate that Tbilisi is attempting to re-open Moscow's most sensitive region where Russia is accumulating almost insurmountable problems. The Circassian Question got particularly sensitive in 2014 because of holding the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragedy, and the Winter Olympics in Sochi together, not only in the very same year but also in the same places. Since it is difficult for Moscow to question the moral authority behind the resolution by the Georgian authorities its only remaining option is to impute Georgia for his hidden agenda. That is hardly likely to change attitudes in the North Caucasus and the Circassian community as a whole (Haindrava, 2011).

## **5.6 Turkish Policy**

The Turkish policy toward the Circassian Question is much depend on Circassian Diaspora in Turkey. We should not forget that Circassians are one of the largest ethnic minorities in Turkey, with an estimated population between 130,000 and 2 million. Therefore, there is public interest in Turkey in developments in the North Caucasus. This large Caucasian diaspora is organized in a number of associations that have acted as pressure groups on the Turkish government. The largest umbrella organization is the Federation of

Caucasian Associations (KAFFED), established in July 2003, and responsible for coordinating the activities of all groups (Winrow, 2009: p. 13).

Generally, I think Turkey's position in the Northwest Caucasus has been dependent on a number of factors: a balancing of its Western commitments with its excellent economic relationship with the Russian Federation; its shared interest with coastal area in Balk Sea in positioning itself as a transit hub for hydrocarbons; its ethnic kinship with Turkic people like Balkars and Karachays; and its historically fraught relationship with Circassia in 19<sup>th</sup> century. In terms of the doctrine, the major initiatives assumed by the AKP state since 2003 aimed at building a neighboring zone of 'zero problems' (Oskanian, 2011: pp. 26-27). Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Turkish Republic was guided by the origin 'Peace at Home, Peace Abroad' declared by the founder of modern Turkey, *Kemal Atatürk*<sup>324</sup>. This saying essentially enunciated the era of isolationism in foreign policy and rejection of the claims of *pan-Turkism* movement for political union with external Turks. All these events amplified historical parallels of the current position of Turkey with the glory of the Ottoman Empire (Ataman, 2002: p.12; Murinson, 2006: p.946).

With the extensive transformation and changes that occurred in the Soviet Union following 1989, Turkey realized that they had to review her Moscow-centered foreign policy in accordance with developments taking place throughout the former Soviet territory, and particularly in the Northwest Caucasus. Until that date, any development occurring in the Caucasus was being accepted as an internal affair of the Soviet Union and was left to Moscow. After this date, it became necessary to establish relations with newly emerging political formations and to develop policies oriented towards them. However, within the framework of these developments, there suddenly appeared a serious lack of knowledge about the Caucasus among the sector we call the policymakers who decide the internal and foreign policies of Turkey. All kinds of resources were needed in order to rectify this lack of knowledge and formulate a realistic and effective policy. At that very moment, the significance and role of diaspora organizations, which had continued to exist in the cultural and social arenas, were highlighted. These people and their organizations turned into important sources of foreign policy input given their accumulated knowledge and existing or potential ties with their homelands. Parallel to the developments taking place in their

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324. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) was a Turkish army officer, revolutionary, and founder of the Republic of Turkey, serving as its first President from 1923 until his death in 1938. Ideologically a secularist and nationalist, his policies and theories became known as Kemalism.

homelands, these associations and foundations initiated lobbying to increase Turkey's involvement in the region. At first, these activities were inadequate and somewhat amateurish; however, in a short time lobbying and the organizations started to become better planned and more effective. Now, it is clear that these structures, which took shape in the early 1990s, have a serious information and relations network between Turkey and the Northwest Caucasus (Çelikpala, 2006: p. 429). In spite of all the engaged signs, it rapidly became clear that Turkey was neither mighty of capitalizing on them nor alone in its bid to fill the power vacancy. On the contrary, the competition between the rival countries seeking influence in the rapidly changing Eurasian environment became a 21<sup>st</sup> century replica of the "Great Game", with the Russian Federation, Turkey, Iran, and the U.S. envisioning themselves as key players. The competition among them took on economic, political, ideological, and religious dimensions, and thus produced various possibilities for widespread conflict (Aydin, 2000: p. 40).

When we look at the period from the North Caucasian viewpoint, we observe that although Turkey has recognized the North Caucasus as a region within the Russian Federation, as a result of the activities and demands of the diaspora organizations she had started to develop a North Caucasian policy independent of Russia. At the same time, the North Caucasians living in Turkey followed closely all the developments in the region and attempted to realize the process of return to the homeland, which they had seen only as an abstract goal until this period. All associations in Turkey tried to establish one-to-one relations with the republics, organizations, and peoples in the North Caucasus and lobbied in accordance with the developments taking place in the region, with a close interest in Turkey's domestic and foreign policies. Their demand was that Turkey should take a more active stance as an intervening party in the developments and politics of the region since Turkey accommodated considerable numbers of North Caucasian population and since she was perceived as a regional power, whose influence could affect the balances in the region. In order to attain this goal, it can be said that the North Caucasian diaspora, acting in unison, tried to influence Turkish politicians and foreign policy, particularly within the range of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Russian-Chechen wars. In the end, they succeeded in their efforts, although to a limited extent (Çelikpala, 2006: p. 430). In spite of the reduced influence of many of the Caucasian lobbies, Turkish officials remain careful not to upset Russian sensitivities. Nevertheless, AKP officials most probably are very uncomfortable with what seems to be a policy of the Russian Federal Security Service to assassinate Chechen insurgent leaders who have sought refuge in Turkey.

Again, I want to draw the attention to evaluate Ankara-Moscow relations in the context of Circassian and North Caucasian Diasporas. Lobbies that want Russia-Turkey bilateral relations to be positive are comprised of politicians and businesspersons of Turkish and Caucasian backgrounds. Additionally, Russian authority hopes that the form of Islam in Turkey could weaken the radical Islam that is carried by a majority in Circassians and in general in the North Caucasus.

## 5.7 Winter Olympics of Sochi

Obviously, the most effective contemporary factor on the Circassian Question was recent winter Olympic. In fact, the political high profile involvement and campaigning have become increasingly commonplace when determining the location of prestigious international sports events (Markovits & Rensmann, 2010). The successful Russian campaign for bringing the Olympic Winter Games in 2014 to Sochi was certainly no exception. Indeed, the Sochi Games have been characterized, as President Vladimir Putin's "pet idea" (Müller, 2011: p. 2095) and the pulling through of the project would probably have been inconceivable without him. Putin headed the Russian delegation to the Guatemala City IOC meeting in 2007 where the decision was made to let the Russian Federation and Sochi arrange the Olympic Winter Games. This made, already at this stage, the Sochi Games the most expensive Winter Olympics ever in the history of the Olympic movement (Ibid).

After this introduction, I should mention that historically Sochi was the last Circassian capital, and it has become a sacred place and a site of great symbolic value for the indigenous population and the Circassian diaspora. This is why so many Circassians were vocally critical of the idea of bringing the Olympic Games to Sochi (Bullough, 2012). Especially provocative for them was the fact that the downhill competitions of the Games were to be located in the mountains, at *Krasnaya Polyana*<sup>325</sup>, the very site where the Russians organized their victory parade on May 21, 1864. The grounds of *Krasnaya Polyana* hold many Circassian remains from those battles, which gave rise to Circassian protests under the slogan: 'No Olympics on our ancestors' graves' (Persson, 2013: pp. 72-94). It added further insult to injury that the Olympic year of 2014 coincided with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Russo-Circassian war and the ensuing mass deportation of Circassians.

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325. Krasnaya Polyana in Russian: *Красная Поляна*, is an urban locality (an urban-type settlement) in Krasnopolyansky Settlement Okrug, which is under the administrative jurisdiction of Adlersky City District of the City of Sochi in Krasnodar Krai, Russia.

On a more general level, the Sochi Winter Games are, just like other mega-events to be hosted by Russia such as the FIFA World Cup in football in 2018, prone to provide a stage for the delivery of the message that Russia has once again resumed its role of great power in the contemporary world. With his domestic legitimacy dwindling, as it was suggested during the long series of urban protests in connection with the parliamentary elections of 2011 and the presidential polls of 2012 (Sakwa, 2012: pp. 231-246; Shevtsova, 2012: pp. 209-216), the Sochi Winter Games may prove to be a welcome opportunity for Putin to display strength and resolve and demonstrate that he is still a much needed strong hand at the helm. The Sochi Games are likely to be the occasion for the display of Russia as an indisputable great power, capable of organizing strong, secure and maybe even brilliantly staged Games. Indeed, it is hard to reach any conclusion other than that there is a very specific rationale behind the determination of the Russian authorities to organize the Games in Sochi in spite of all problems, economic, interethnic, and security-related (Müller, 2013: p. 06; Petersson & Vamling, 2013: pp. 6-7). This Olympic was once effective when a global consensus was formed by the Circassian Diaspora and activists. These activities included the media warfare and bolding the subject in the academic assemblies. In the following, I point out to some of the activities that are the basis for the formation of the Circassian question as a new format in the international sphere.

### **5.7.1 Role of Circassian Activists**

Before the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014, there was an intense discussion on Russia's record on democracy and human rights, and whether it was appropriate to organize such an event in an authoritarian setting. With regard to Sochi, as for all sites of major sports events in non-democratic settings, continued critical attention is however called for to assess political developments even, and perhaps especially, after the conclusion of the Games. The Circassian position was contradictory in the sense that whereas this indigenous group for the most part intensely opposed the organization of the Winter Games in Sochi, the Games themselves defined the uncommon opportunity for them to make their express heard in the international sphere. During the Olympics, they had a global audience, large parts of which were ready and formulated to listen while they communicated their claims for recognition of their cause (Hansen, 2014).

Bo Petersson and Karina Vamling (2015: p. 7) in this regards say: "One item, in particular, has of late become vital for the attempts of attaining global appreciation for the dignity and indeed the identity of the Circassians, namely the striving to have the atrocities of the Russian



wars against the Circassians during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century recognized as genocide”. As elaborated on by Zhemukhov (2012), “Circassian activists form a heterogeneous group. Starting with the most radical sentiments, the Circassian movement could according to him be visualized on a scale ranging from vocal nationalists, who would demand a state of their own for the Circassians, over sovereigntists, culturalists<sup>326</sup> and centrists onto accommodationists<sup>327</sup>, the latter of whom strive for reaching a common understanding with the Russian authorities”. In general, the most free-hearted nationalists would be keen on the diaspora, whilst most accommodationists would join to be energetic in the homeland, where they have to co-exist on a daily grade with the other ethnics. The recognition of what Circassians claim to be the genocide committed by the Russian Empire in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century has ever since the end of the *Cold War* being one of the three professed main goals of Circassian activist groups in the diaspora, alongside the right of repatriation to the homeland and the unification of Circassian territories (Zhemukhov, 2012: pp. 505-506).

Of these three, the recognition goal would seem to be the one politically most attainable in the short to medium time perspective, and it was thus to this goal that the main energy was devoted by activist groups during the years preceding the Sochi Olympics. In the words of Hansen (2014: p. 199), “genocide recognition has become the new banner of the Circassian revival over the last couple of years. The issue has attained symbolic value and has become a centerpiece of the identity construction of Circassian groups in the diaspora, and has come to make up the nexus of cooperation between the diaspora and the homeland”. In other words, genocide recognition has come to be almost synonymous with the struggle for recognition of the Circassian identity as an indigenous population. If widely recognized by the international community, the recognition of the genocide could potentially and in the long run lead to the articulation of demands for e.g. certain political rights, but this has thus most often not been the immediate focus of the activities. In any case, the attention awarded

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326. In philosophy and sociology, culturalism is the central importance of culture as an organizing force in human affairs. It was originally coined by the Polish-American philosopher and sociologist Florian Znaniecki in his book *Cultural Reality* (1919) in English and later translated into Polish as *kulturalizm*. Znaniecki had introduced a similar concept in earlier Polish language publications which he described as *humanism*.

327. Accommodationism is a judicial interpretation which espouses that "the government may support or endorse religious establishments as long as it treats all religions equally and does not show preferential treatment." Accommodationists espouse the view that "religious individuals, and/or religious entities may be accommodated by government in regard to such things as free exercise rights, access to government programs and facilities, and religious expression."

to the Sochi Olympics meant that Circassians were provided with a worldwide stage on which their demands for recognition of the genocide and thus their identity, albeit for a limited while, could be vocalized with much greater resonance (Petersson & Vamling, 2015).

Committed activist groups who, in the diaspora and at home, purposefully frame events differently from what certain government structures do and strive to gain acceptance and recognition for their interpretations could with good reason be regarded as transnational advocacy networks (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). They are well organized for political ends and equipped with elaborate ideas about what strategies to follow. Whereas all of these tactics seem relevant for the analysis and understanding of Circassian activism in relation to the Sochi Games, it is information politics and symbolic politics that are of special importance here. In connection with the Sochi Olympics, Circassian activists made substantial efforts both with regard to the questions of issue-framing and, on the basis of this, agenda-setting. The foremost examples pertain to the framing of the warfare of the Russian Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as genocide against the Circassians, and the placing of the recognition of this genocide on the international agenda. This contributed to the strengthening of a common identity among Circassians at home and abroad and helped strengthen the struggle for recognition of the Circassian genocide. The appearance of interactive technology and social media contributed to the easier spread of information and transnational contacts.

Overall, it seems that the Sochi issue brought different groups of the diaspora together and strengthened, not least through the establishment of the oppositional [nosochi.com](http://nosochi.com) website, transnational interaction in the diaspora (Kaya, 2014; Hansen, 2014). Vocally criticizing the organization of Olympics at the site of Sochi and adamantly pleading for an international boycott of the Games (Persson, 2014), the website became a gathering point internally and was widely noticed externally. It attracted considerable international attention and became a platform for the Circassian efforts at constructing symbolic politics to promote their cause. However, it is difficult to assess how much the global attention around the Games has actually promoted the Circassian cause and how big its impact on the Circassian movement will be in a longer perspective. Even if some internal divisions remain within the Circassian movement, the campaign against the Sochi Winter Games has served to mobilize Circassians internally, strengthened their articulation of a common identity and helped them to raise the international awareness of their hitherto marginalized conditions of existence. In that sense, for all the losses of prestige and the disrespect incurred through the organization of the Sochi Olympics on the lands of their ancestors' graves, the Circassians may therefore

on balance and on a collective level have seemed to benefit from the Sochi mega-event (Petersson & Vamling, 2017: pp. 510-515) (Figure. 24).

### **5.8 Formation of Circassian Genocide Issue**

As it mentioned the activists could have effected on the Circassian Question by highlighting the Circassian genocide in the global Media before and after winter Olympics of Sochi. The Circassian activists have demanded that the Caucasian War, which led to the disappearance of the Circassians from the Northern Caucasus, should be recognized as a war of annexation; this has been and remains the most painful issue for the Circassian Question. The Congress of Circassians set up in 2004 repeatedly asked the State Duma of Russia and European Parliament to recognize Circassian genocide. The very fact that the Congress was set up and is functioning means that the past is closely connected with the present. The Congress was set up to preserve the language and the culture of the Circassian and to consolidate them in their historical homeland; it is also concerned with collecting and systematizing documents relating to the Russo-Circassian War. Actually, I mean that the Circassian genocide is the Russian Empire's ethnic cleansing, killing, forced migration (Javakhishvili, 2015), and dismissal of the Circassians from their historical homeland, which roughly encompassed the main part of the North Caucasus and the northeast shore of the Black Sea. Historically, this occurred in the aftermath of the Caucasian War in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Regarding the term of genocide, in 1990, the Circassians designated 21 May as the National Day of Mourning, on which they commemorate the tragedy of the nation and remind them 21 May 1864; the *Russian Tsar Alexander II* declared that the war had ended with the occupation of Circassia. The Tsar approved a decision to deport and exile the entire Circassians for their refusal to convert to Christianity from Islam and the constant raids they performed on Russian villages (Figure. 26).

I should mention that in 2009, the Congress announced the intention to set up a Circassian Government in Exile brought the Circassian Question to a new level: "Circassia should be returned to its status of an independent state and unite all the Circassians. The future government is determined to rely on the Declaration of Independence of Circassia of the time of the Caucasian War (1835) and the Declaration of Independence of Circassia issued by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in 1996" (Khlynina, 2013:

pp. 308-309). There is an *Adyghe Xabze*<sup>328</sup> public movement in all the republics with a Circassian component; at first, it represented the interests of the Black Sea Shapsugs. It was established in the early 1990s to give back the removed Shapsug National District, among other functions. Its members did a lot to develop the small autochthonous ethnic community of the Black Sea Shapsugs culturally, socially, and economically (Shakhnazarian, 2008: pp. 32-33).

Also in recent years, Circassian activists have proposed that the deportations could be considered a manifestation of the modern day concept of ethnic cleansing, though the term had not been in use, noting the systematic emptying of villages by Russian soldiers that was accompanied by the Russian colonization of Circassia (Smirnov, 2006).

In 2004, the Worldwide Circassian Brotherhood (WCB) appeared with a young membership determined to preserve and increase the cultural and historical heritage of the Circassians and establish contacts with compatriots in other countries. The leader, Zamir Shukhov, believes that it should move toward “unity of the Circassians in their historical homeland” but “as part of Russia” (Shmulevich, 2015). Until recently, all the Circassian organizations shared the following aims: 1. Insist on recognition by the official powers of the Russian Federation of the genocide of the Circassians during the Russo-Circassian War; 2. Create conditions necessary to set up one republic for all the Circassians; 3. Promote repatriation of the descendants of Circassian *émigrés*. (Bubenok, 2015; pp. 141-143) In October 2006, the Circassian public organizations of Russia, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Syria, the United States, Belgium, Canada, and Germany have sent the president of the European Parliament a letter with the request to recognize the genocide against Circassian people<sup>329</sup>.

As it mentioned earlier, finally, on May 21, 2011, the Parliament of Georgia passed a resolution, stating that ‘pre-planned’ mass killings of Circassians by Imperial Russia, should be recognized as ‘genocide’ and those displaced during those events from their homeland, should be identified as ‘refugees’ and turn back. Georgia, which has poor relations with Russia, has made outreach efforts to North Caucasian ethnic groups since the Russo-Georgian War (Barry, 2011).

Walter Richmond also argues the term of genocide is appropriate, considering the events of 1864 to have been one of the first examples of modern social engineering. Citing

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328. Circassian Habze alternatively spelled Khabze, Khabza, or Xabze, also called Habzism, is the philosophy and worldview of the Circassians.

329. You see more details: <http://www.unpo.org/article.php?id=5634>

international law which holds that genocidal intent applies to acts of destruction that are not the specific purpose but are predictable outcomes or corollary of a policy, which could have been eluded by a changing in that policy. Actually, he considers the events to have been genocide that the following policy of demographic transformation of whole Caucasus and Circassia to a mainly ethnically Russian region as desirable by the Russian authorities (Kumykov, 2003: p. 80), and that the Russian commanders were fully aware of the huge number of deaths by starvation that their methods in the war and the expulsion would bring, as they viewed them as necessary for their supreme goal that Circassia be firmly and permanently Russian territory, all the while viewing Circassia's native inhabitants as "little more than a pestilence to be removed" (Richmond, 2013: pp. 92-97)(Figure. 25).

To sum up, according to the idea of Maja Catic (2015) the term of genocide was not used to describe the fate of the Circassians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1990's, when "significant grievances revolving around the brutality not only of the more recent Stalinist, but also of the more distant, Tsarist past, and the struggle for historical truth started playing prominent roles in motivating nationalist mobilization inside the Soviet Union. The struggle for historical truth manifested itself in a clash between the official Soviet history and the 'counter-memory' of the historically repressed groups. In the North Caucasus, this clash concerned the historical relationship between Russia and the Caucasus, as well as the inter-ethnic relations among the peoples of the North Caucasus". The official Soviet version of 'voluntary joining' and 'friendship of peoples' was challenged by the alternative version of 'forceful incorporation' and 'inter-ethnic competition' (Shnirelman, 2006: pp. 283-284) (Table. 13).

## **5.9 Relation between Diaspora & Homeland**

Each chapter, I brought up the factor of diaspora, because I think the Diaspora role is among the most effective phenomenon in the Circassian Question. In this regard, the relation between the Circassian Diaspora and their homeland can be discussed in the contemporary political factors. After the conquest in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian strategy was to give the Circassians the option to resettle to Cossack-controlled areas on the plains north of the Caucasus or to emigrate. However, as Kreiten (2009: p. 219) notes, "It was quite clear to Russian officials in the Caucasus that the Circassians would not leave their homeland voluntarily, but only when threatened with extermination". As mentioned, the largest groups of Circassian emigrants to present-day Turkey or in the territory of the Ottoman Empire came to live in the central and northwestern parts of the country.

Contacts between Circassians in the homeland and in the diaspora became increasingly difficult in the early 1920s after the development of the new Soviet state and its increasing isolation, suspicion, repression and closed borders (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 75-76). During the 1930's many Circassian leaders and intellectuals in the homeland became victims of Stalin's purges. Under WW II the Circassian lands came under Nazi occupation (Ibid: pp. 76-79). Major political changes, favorable for the Circassians, took place in the region in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. From having been expelled from their homeland, and thereafter regarding it as almost inaccessible, the prospect of return started to seem realistic for diaspora Circassians. Glasnost, perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 opened up the borders and allowed for reinvigorated contacts with homeland Circassians.

In this period, popular political-social organizations were beginning to emerge in the North Caucasus, such as the Confederation of Caucasian Peoples, to which the Circassian Musa Shanibov was elected the first president (Besleney, 2014: pp. 91-92). Actually, I can call this period was the beginning of relation between Circassia and Circassian Diaspora. Following the first international event in Ankara in 1989 to commemorate the exile, the International Circassian Association (ICA) was established in Nalchik in 1991 and became an important political actor and basis for transnational Circassian networking (Ibid: p. 119). At much, the same time Caucasian and Circassian associations became more active in Turkey, where legislative changes were introduced in 2002 that gave organizations the right to get in touch with and join associations in foreign countries (Özgür, 2011). The Federation of Caucasian Associations (KAFFED), an umbrella organization and central actor in Circassian diaspora politics in Turkey, developed close contacts with ICA and largely came to share its pro-Moscow orientation that had increased over the years (Besleney, 2014: p. 105).

Direct contacts and travel between the diaspora groups and the homeland in North Caucasus in the Russian Federation had become facilitated, the Circassian organizations in Turkey had become stronger and more active, and there was vastly improved communication between and within different segments of the diaspora, on the one hand, and the homeland, on the other. At the same time, the internal political climate in Russia and the Caucasus was becoming increasingly tense. Important new actors in the Circassian diaspora responded to this situation. Among these were the Caucasus Forum (KF) in Turkey and the US-based

Circassian Cultural Institute<sup>330</sup>, demanding self-determination for the Circassians, repatriation to the Caucasus and the establishment of Circassia as a single entity in the Caucasus and launching campaigns to reach international recognition of the ‘genocide’ (Besleney, 2014: pp. 161-162; Petersson & Vamling, 2017).

In recent year, mainly, the aid for Syrian Circassians coming from Syria to Circassia has been organized by the non-governmental organizations. Kabardin-Balkarian Community Foundation “*Perit*” comes first among these organizations. According to the information recently released, 1800 people requested the invitation from the *Perit* foundation. Only 1.250 of these requests could be met, while others still wait. In order to prepare the invitations, firstly the passport copies of those who made a request are translated from Arabic to Russian. There are many of those who cannot leave Syria due to the lack of travel allowance even if they receive an invitation. Those who arrive, on the other hand, face problems such as rent and food expenses as and finding a permanent place to live. The increase in the number of Circassians “returning to the homeland” depends on how the events in Syria develop and ended, as well as on the new order and how they proceed their life in their new settlements. In addition, Circassians in Turkey have mobilized to help Circassians living in Syria. The Federation of Caucasian Associations (KAFFED) launched a campaign for charity collection (Kushabiyev, Neflasheva & Orhan, 2012: pp. 21-22).

Therefore, much more relations between Circassian Diaspora and Circassian in Circassia can have a significant impact on the Circassian Question and identity. It can drive the Circassian associations in the unit umbrella. Also, many researchers working on the Circassian Diaspora agree with the definition of a classical or victim diaspora due to the events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century dispersing them (Shami, 1998: pp. 177-204; Bram, 1999; Kaya, 2004; Vardania, 2007: pp. 121-133). It must be considered that, as Nil Doğan suggests (Pattie, 2005: pp. 49-67), there is a variety within the diaspora, in the way people identify with a diasporic identity, what it means to be Circassian, the conception of the homeland, and the relation to the current place of settlement. More and more, the Circassians living in Turkey, like other diasporas, maintain their ethnonational identity, impound their homeland citizenship, publicly recognize as members of diasporic organizations, and are not unwilling to act publicly on behalf of their homelands and scattered ethnicities (Sheffer, 2003: p. 03).

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330. later the International Circassian Council





## 6 Chapter - Circassian Language & Literature

### 6.1 Introduction

The Circassian is a split of the Northwest Caucasian language group, which also includes in generic form, *Abkhaz-Abaza*, and *Ubykh*. The Circassian itself is divided into two formal dialectal formats: West Circassian which is popularly known as *Adyghean*, and East Circassian which also is known as *Kabardian*. The West Circassian dialect contains *Temirgoy*, *Shapsug*, *Abzekh*, *Hatkoy*, and *Bzhedugh*. In the opposite part, East Circassian consist only of *Kabardian* and *Besleney*.

The most of our knowledge about Circassian literature is based on the report of travelers to the region. They usually have given controversial reports as to the level of extension of Circassian literature. For example, according to F. *Bodenstedt*, a German traveler in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, says that “Poetry is both a repository of national wisdom and sagacity, a guide to noble action, and the ultimate arbiter ... It is the moralizer and the preventer of evil deeds” (Jaimoukha, 1998). *Paul B. Henze* believes that “Circassians had a rich tradition of oral poetry. Oratory was a highly developed art. Leaders gained as much renowned for their speechmaking ability as for their skill in battle” (Henze, 1992: p.71). Therefore, it seems that their literature was mostly based on poems or poetry speech, and as well as oral legends. Anyone in this type of society is literally conveying literature, and in this way, literature itself could have had a great impact on identity formation. Oral tradition includes thousands of tales and stories about the life of ancient Circassian life. There are accounts of the origins of the Circassian, with whom they created connections, heroes and anti-heroes, historical events and so on. About their literature, it can be introduced some good works of Circassian scholars. For example, in 1860 *Kusikov* published a book in the name of 'On the Poetry of the Circassians' in Stavropol. Also in 1924, a set of Adyghean literary material was published in Moscow. Another work had been released by 1929 about the history of Kabardian literature by *Chamozokov*. The literature was formalized in the Soviet era, then many pieces were created. In fact, classic literature was set down that have kept their value up to current time (Jaimoukha, 1998).

In addition, we should consider that the language is one of the most sensible signs of cultural identity. It is the existence phrase of wisdom, of particular cultural and linguistic understanding, a tool for recognizing and realizing the homeland and all the history and

accompaniment it maintains, and a clue to future durability. As an alternative to arguing values, faiths, and traditions, it has an important social subsidiary and develops feelings of community identity and alliance. It is one of most strong reason to study the literature in my thesis.

The language situation among Circassians is difficult and contradictory owing to replacement by Russian in many spheres of communication that has been historically caused by some factors: sociopolitical, historical, cultural, geopolitical, religious, household. For preservation and functional development of the Circassian language, it is necessary to make changes to laws on languages in Circassian Republics on the expansion of spheres of use of languages of all Circassians which in-laws are limited generally to spheres of media and education systems. It is necessary to develop and approve the State program of preservation, studying and development of the all dialects of the Circassian language. It is the language that displays the ethnic unity and public identity. But, as we know, the language is also exposed to the effects of the environment, adapts to the changing conditions of societies and communities. Today, our consideration should be paid to conserving the successes and values that the people have gathered throughout the historical route, and preserving the experience of previous generations. The protection of the language should be the entitlement of the state, and until that happens, the situation will not change for the major conditions.

In this chapter, it is tried to show how the Circassian language and literature managed and influenced their identity in contemporary concept, Circassian Question in general, and lead it to cultural-linguistic identity in particular. To clarify this, the focus of this section is on these points: how oral literature, religious books, folk literature, folk epics, elements of tribal beliefs, and tribal law are included in Circassian language and literature, and how those elements drove into a united cultural identity based on the ethnolinguistic phenomenon. The most of the data and translation took from Jaimoukha's (1998) research about Circassian Literature which is one only sources. Therefore, I try to quote him more in this chapter.

## **6.2 Circassian Language**

The Circassian language itself is under the Northwest Caucasian Linguistic group<sup>331</sup>. The main area of this group spoken is located in the northwestern Caucasus as it mentioned earlier, specifically in three Russian republics: Adyghea, Kabardin-Balkar, Karachay-Cherkess, the disputed territory of Abkhazia, Turkey, and the Middle East. This languages'

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331. West Caucasian, Abkhazo-Adyghean, Circassic, or Pontic

relationship with other language families even in the Caucasus, is uncertain. One language, Ubykh, became extinct in 1992, while all of the other languages are in some form of endangerment, with UNESCO classifying all as either vulnerable, endangered, or severely endangered<sup>332</sup>. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, there are five recognized languages in the Northwest Caucasian family: Abkhaz, Abaza, Kabardian or East Circassian, Adyghe or West Circassian, and Ubykh (Hoiberg, 2010: p. 33). They are classified as follows:

1. Abkhaz–Abaza

- a. Abaza

- b. Abkhaz

2. Circassian

- a. Adyghean

- b. Kabardian

3. Ubykh

In this case, many linguists believe that the Northwest and Northeast Caucasian languages made the North Caucasian family, sometimes called Caucasian<sup>333</sup>, which is thought to be unassociated, albeit influenced by their northern neighbors. This hypothesis has been best painted by *Sergei Nikolayev and Sergei A. Starostin*, who presented a set of phonological communication and shared morphological structure. However, there is no consensus that the relationship has been shown, and many consider the correspondences to be spurious for the reasons mentioned above.

Circassian<sup>334</sup>, also known as Cherkess<sup>335</sup>, is a branch of the Northwest Caucasian language family. There are two Circassian languages, defined by their literary standards, Adyghe<sup>336</sup>, also known as West Circassian, with half a million speakers, and Kabardian<sup>337</sup>, also known as East Circassian, with a million. The languages are reciprocally intelligible with one another but differ to a degree where they would be noticed clear-cut dialects. The

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332. See: UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in danger in [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

333. In opposition to Kartvelian-South Caucasian

334. *sɜ:r'kæfən*

335. *tʃɜ:r'kɛs*

336. In Circassian: КIахыбзэ

337. In Circassian: Къэбэрдейбзэ

earliest extant written records of the Circassian languages are in the Perso-Arabic script, recorded by the Turkish traveler *Evliya Çelebi*<sup>338</sup> in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Dankoff, 2004).

Some linguists such as *Henricus Joannes Smeets* and *Aert H. Kuipers* argued that there is a strong consensus among the linguistic community about the fact that Adyghean and Kabardian are typologically distinct languages (Kuipers, 1960: p.7; Smeets, 1984: p.41). However, the local course for these languages refers to them as accents or dialects. In the Russian language, the Circassian subdivision is treated as a single language and called *Adygskij*<sup>339</sup>, meaning the Circassian language, whereas the Adyghean language is called *Adygejskij*<sup>340</sup>, meaning the language of those in the Republic of Adyghea. We should consider that as it is mentioned earlier, the terms ‘Circassian’ and ‘Cherkess’ are sometimes used in several languages as synonyms for the Northwest Caucasian languages in general or the Adyghean language in particular.

Northwest Caucasian languages have partly simple noun systems, with only a punch of cases at the most, mortised with highly agglutinative verbal systems that can contain almost the entire syntactic structure of the sentence. All finite and limited verbs are marked for agreement with three arguments: utter, ergative, and indirect object, (Nichols, 1986: pp. 56-119) and there are also a wide range of applicative constructions. There is a gap between *dynamic* and *stative* verbs, with dynamic verbs having a largely compound morphology. A verb's morphemes detect the subject's and object's place, person, the manner of action, time, negative, and other types of grammatical classifications.

Some linguistics have seen dependency between the Northwest Caucasian especially Circassian family and the gone Hattic language. It was spoken in Eastern Anatolia, in modern *Boğazköy*, until about 1800 BC, when it was probably replaced by the Indo-European, Hittite language. The name *Hetto-Iberian*<sup>341</sup> was proposed by Georgian historian *Simon Janashia*<sup>342</sup> for a superfamily containing the South Caucasian languages, other Caucasian language groups, Hattic and other languages of ancient Anatolia. Even though in many Circassian

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338. Derviş Mehmed Zillî (25 March 1611 – 1682), known as *Evliya Çelebi* in Ottoman Turkish: *اوليا چلبی*, was an Ottoman explorer who travelled through the territory of the Ottoman Empire and neighboring lands over a period of forty years, recording his commentary in a travelogue called the *Seyahatname*.

339. Адыгский

340. Адыгейский

341. The Iberian in the name refers to Caucasian Iberia, a kingdom centered in eastern Georgia which lasted from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE; it is not related to the Iberian Peninsula

342. In Georgian: *ბობინჯანაშია*; July 13, 1900 – November 5, 1947

family names we can find the prefixes like ‘Hath’ or ‘Hatti’, and even one of the well-known Adyghean tribes has the name ‘Hatuqwai’<sup>343</sup> which seems that from *Hatti*<sup>344</sup>+ *Kkhye*<sup>345</sup>; meaning ‘HattiSon’ (Burney, 2004: p.106).

### 6.2.1 Adyghe Language

Adyghe<sup>346</sup> or Adyghean language or dialect; also known as West Circassian<sup>347</sup>, is one of the two official languages of the Republic of Adygea in the Russian Federation, the other being Russian. It is spoken by various tribes of the Adyghe people: *Abzekh*, *Adamey*, *Bzhedug*, *Hatuqwai*, *Temirgoy*, *Mamkhegh*, *Natekuay*, *Shapsug*, *Zhaney* and *Yegerikuay*, each with its own dialect. The literary language is based on the *Temirgoy* dialect.

There are apparently more than 100,000 speakers of Adyghean in Russia, almost all of them native speakers. In total, some 300,000 speak it worldwide. The largest Adyghe-speaking community is in Turkey, spoken by the post-Russo–Circassian War (1763–1864) diaspora. Kabardian or East Circassian is a very close relative, treated by some as a dialect of Adyghe or of an overarching Circassian language. Ubykh, Abkhaz, and Abaza are somewhat more distantly related to Adyghean.

The language was standardized after the October Revolution in 1917. Since 1936, the Cyrillic script has been used to write Adyghe. Before that, an Arabic-based alphabet was used together with the Latin. In recent years, use of the Latin script has seen a resurgence, particularly among Circassian Nationalists. Originally unstandardized, all dialects of Adyghe are now included in the ICSLO<sup>348</sup>, providing a standardized Latin script that is gaining popularity<sup>349</sup>. Dialects include:

#### I. The Black Sea coast dialects:

##### 1. Shapsug dialect<sup>350</sup>

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343. In Circassian: Хъатыкъуай

344. In Circassian: Хъаты

345. In Circassian: Кхъуэ, means male or son

346. *ædɨgeɪ* or *a:di'geɪ*

347. КӀахыбзэ, К'ахыbzæ

348. Indigenous Caucasian Standard Latin Orthography

349. The ICSLO treats Kabardian as a dialect of Adyghe, so Kabardian-exclusive consonants such as the labiodental ejective fricative are also represented in its Adyghe Latin script

350. In Circassian: Шапсыгъабзэ

- a. North Shapsugs, Great Shapsugs, Kuban Shapsugs dialect<sup>351</sup>
- b. Temirgoy-Shapsugs, Pseuško accent<sup>352</sup>
- c. South Shapsugs, Small Shapsugs, Coastal Shapsugs, the Black Sea Shapsugs dialect<sup>353</sup>
- d. Hakuchi dialect<sup>354</sup>
- 2. Natukhai dialect<sup>355</sup>
- 3. Zhaney dialect

## II. The Kuban River dialects:

- 1. Bzhedug dialect<sup>356</sup>
- 2. Temirgoy<sup>357</sup>
- 3. Abzakh dialect<sup>358</sup>
- 4. Mamkhegh dialect
- 5. Yegeruqay dialect
- 6. Hatuqwai dialect
- 7. Mequash dialect

### 6.2.2 Kabardian Language

Kabardian<sup>359</sup> language or dialect, also known as Kabardino-Cherkess<sup>360</sup> or East Circassian, is a Northwest Caucasian language closely related to the Adyghean language. It is spoken mainly in parts of the North Caucasus republics of Kabardin-Balkar and Karachay-Cherkess, and in Turkey, Jordan and Syria (the extensive post-war diaspora). It has 47 or 48 consonant phonemes, of which 22 or 23 are fricatives, depending upon whether one counts ‘h’ as phonemic, but it has only 3 phonemic vowels. It is one of very few languages to possess a clear phonemic distinction between ejective affricates and ejective fricatives (Bauer, 2007).

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351. In Circassian: Шапсыгъэшху

352. In Circassian: КӀэмгуе-шапсыгъ

353. In Circassian: Шапсыгъэ-цӀыкӀу

354. In Circassian: ХьакӀуцубзэ, Къарацхаибзэ

355. In Circassian: НэтӀхъуаджэбзэ

356. In Circassian: БжӀэдыгъубзэ

357. In Circassian: КӀэмыгуябзэ, КӀэмгуибзэ

358. In Circassian: Абдзэхабзэ

359. In Circassian: кэ'ba:rdiən

360. In Circassian: къэбӀэрдей-черкесыбзэ

The Kabardian language has two major dialects; *Kabardian* and *Besleney*. Some linguists argue that Kabardian is only one dialect of an overarching Adyghe or Circassian language, which consists of all of the dialects of Adyghe and Kabardian together, and the Kabardians themselves most often refer to their language using the Kabardian term Adyghean language. Several linguists, including *Georges Dumézil*, have used the terms Eastern Circassian and Western Circassian to avoid that confusion, but both Circassian and Kabardian may still be found in linguistic literature. There are several key phonetic and lexical differences that create a reasonably well-defined separation between the eastern and the western Circassian dialects, but the degree to which the two are mutually intelligible has not yet been determined. The matter is also complicated somewhat by the existence of Besleney, which is usually considered a dialect of Kabardian but also shares a large number of features with certain dialects of Adyghe. Kabardian is written in a form of Cyrillic and serves as the literary language for Circassians in both Kabardin-Balkar and Karachay-Cherkess. Like all other Northwest Caucasian languages, Kabardian is ergative and has an extremely complex verbal system. Eastern Circassians including as follows:

#### I. Kabardian

##### 1. West Kabardian

- a. Kuban
- b. Kuban-Zelenchuk

##### 2. Central Kabardian

- a. Baksan
- b. Malka

##### 3. Eastern Kabardian

- a. Terek
- b. Mozdok

##### 4. North Kabardian

- a. Mulka
- b. Zabardiqa

#### II. Baslaney dialect<sup>361</sup>

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361. In Circassian: Бэслыныйбзэ

### 6.3 Ancient Literature

Based on my findings and other studies, I dedicate the first part of the literature to the ancient literature. From my point of view, the ancient literature means mostly oral literature and epos which calls in the local term as ‘Nart’.

The corpus of the Nart epic is arguably the most essential ingredient of Circassian culture. It is as important to the Circassian ethos as Greek mythology is to Western Civilization. In fact, NW Caucasians and Greeks on the Eastern Shore of the Black Sea co-existed for more than a thousand years, during which some cultural exchanges must have taken place. This would explain similarities in some of their mythical tales (Libedinsky, 1951: pp 8-18).

Though much less known than their Greek counterparts, the Nart epic tales are no less developed. The heroism, sagacity, guile and oftentimes naked brutality of the Nart heroes and demi-gods are more than matches to those of the Greek Pantheon. In the first stanza of the ‘Song of the Narts’, the double-edged sword is likened to a rabid dog, a graphic illustration of unbridled ferocity:

My great saber is as fearsome as a crazed hound,  
Streaming crimson blood down its twosome fangs.

It should be considering that Nart Epos is the oldest surviving literature among Circassians which mostly were oral folklore. The main themes are those usually associated with heroic tales such as truth, honesty, friendship, patriotism, bravery, and struggle against oppression. Those usually use as the collection of songs which assumed the form of ballads, poems, and song-poems. Even the corpus of Nart songs formed the core of Circassian classical music, which has been used in their daily life for centuries. The troubadours forged the Nart tales in song-like forms to make them more endearing to the listeners, which also helped to preserve them through turbulent years. The rhythm was usually fast, reminiscent of dance music and remained unchanged as the music was developed.

Nart songs started to be collected in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by the late 1960’s the bulk of the corpus had been penned down. In addition, the music was set down to paper, and some of it was recorded. A monumental work was published by the record *company Melodiya* in 1987, a four-record opus that included some of the more famous anthems. The legends of the Narts had been transmitted orally by dozens or maybe hundreds storytellers who acted as guardians of national mythology. Although these tales are undoubted of ancient origin, their language underwent some lexical changes that reflected the introduction of new technology and loan words. In addition, the original significance of some terms has been lost. There might have also been some changes in the contents of the stories, perhaps to suit



the purposes and styles of the storytellers. The existence of different and sometimes divergent versions gives credence to this view (Jaimoukha, 1998: p. 3-4).

There is an ongoing dispute as to the true originators of the epic. The contention is between Ossetic and North Caucasian origins. Dumézil's verdict went in favor of an Indo-European descent, which was hotly contested by Adyghean scholars, such as Asker Hedeghel'e. Even if a non-Caucasian origin were proved, the value of the epic would not be diminished in the least. As time went by, North Caucasian variants assumed a local character as they absorbed the customs and mores of the indigenes, and became a depository of their literary treasures.

Some scholars of Celtic culture are paying more attention to the Nart Epos as a possible connection to the Arthurian and Holy Grail legends is perceived (Littleton, 1979: pp. 326-333; Littleton & Thomas, 1978: pp 513-527). Jaimoukha (1998) later in his research about literature says: "The presence of a Sarmatian legion in the Roman army in the British Isles gives credence to this hypothesis. The Iranian-speaking Sarmatians might have picked up a portion of tales during their sojourn in the North Caucasus and then spread it in Celtic Britain. The tests of strength and worthiness of two of the heroes in the two epics are similar. Sosriqwe<sup>362</sup> used to sneak to Lhepsch's<sup>363</sup> smithy to try to lift the anvil, which was rooted down to the seventh layer of earth, a prerequisite feat for joining the council of the elders. Arthur, on the other hand, had to pull a sword, Excalibur, from a stone anchored by an anvil to prove his claim to sovereignty".

Jaimoukha (1998) believes that "many of the ancient poems and stories were on historical and heroic themes. Nogmov collected specimens of these works to reconstruct a skeletal treatise on the history of Adyghea. Some pieces of poetry go back to hundreds of years. An epic poem recounts one episode of the bloody wars the Circassians waged against the invading Goths:

Oh, Fatherland of Bakhsan son of Dow!  
Though his soul has left his body,  
Do not allow the Goths to ruffle your dignity!  
And if they make to enthrall you,  
Throw their yoke off your shoulders"

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362. In Circassian: Сосрыкъуэ

363. In Circassian: Лъэпщ

## 6.4 Classic Literature

One of the principal milestones in the development of literature is the birth of plot. According to the Circassian scholar and writer *Askerbi T. Shortan*, the first evidence of plot can be found in the mythological motifs of the tale *Psherihizchatse*<sup>364</sup> a mixture of prose and verse. In a capsule, the evil hunter *Psherihizchatse*, who lived in the forest, was so capricious that he slew all the village boys who were sent to cook for him because they did not wake him with due care. One mangy, but the clever lad was able to escape this mortal fate. When the deer came weeping to the yard, he did not call the hunter; instead, he chanted the song of the chase to awaken him. *Psherihizchatse* arose and hunted. He kept the considerate boy as his menial.

Jaimoukha (1998) brings other samples such as: “One of the first instances of dialogue in Circassian literature is in the ancient tale ‘The Elegy of the Maid Who Refused to Marry her Brother’<sup>365</sup> which gives us a glimpse of those far away days when incest was not yet tabooed. The poor girl begs the members of her family, in turn, to let her inside the house. Such stories are considered the forerunners of Circassian drama.

My dearest Mother,  
Radiant as red gilt!  
I beseech you: Open this door.  
The chill is killing me.

If you would just call me mother-in-law,  
I would open it for you.  
How can I call you thus,  
Whilst there is still life in my bones”.

## 6.5 Ethnolinguistic self-identification

Ethnolinguistic identity explains the limit to which one identifies with a specific ethnic and linguistic group. It refers to one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and that element of one’s thoughts, understanding, feelings, and behavior that is derived from ethnic group

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364. In Circassian: пшэрыхъыжъацэ

365. In Circassian: Дэльхум дэкӀуэн зымыда хъыджэбзым и уэрэдыр

membership. Ethnolinguistic identity is characterized by the recognition of common cultural, linguistic, religious, and behavioral traits – real or presumed – as indicators of contrast to other groups, where linguistic self-identification forms a crucial component (Phinney 1996; Giles and Johnson 1987). Questions about ethnic and linguistic self-identification based on the studies of *Howard Giles* and *Patricia Johnson* (1987) were used to gauge the ethnolinguistic identity of young Circassians. However, linguistic self-identification does not mean that people can actually speak these languages or use them in routine life. *John Edwards* (1996, p. 227) claims that among minority groups in which a language shift has occurred in the recent past, the symbolic value of language may be maintained in the absence of a communicative function. Rannut (2011) says: “Language may be connected with group identity even if it is not used regularly or, indeed, known at all. Interviews with several community members as well as the survey results show that the Circassian language is mainly a symbolic marker and that linguistic affiliation is based more on self-identification than on actual language proficiency and use. The symbolic value of language is maintained, but its communicative function is diminishing. The language is linked to group identity, but it is no longer used at home”.

## **6.6 Language Teaching Policy**

The Circassian Language and culture have been under great pressure for almost two centuries and sharply has been affected by seventy-five years of communist ideology that relegated native culture to a secondary situation and elevated Russian language and culture. Although things improved somewhat after 1991, there hasn't been serious work to upgrade the status of mother tongues. The processes of language planning and language policy carried on since 1991 in Circassia cannot be explained without a short reference to the historical, political and social outcomes raised by the nationality and language policies implemented during decades in the former USSR and Tsarist era.

The main thrust of the language policy from 1864 to 1917 was to undermine local languages by excluding them from education and literary usage, with the Russification of the various ethnic groups as the ultimate goal. Russian was the only official language in Circassia, but also Arabic was used in the few religious schools. Only during the independent North Caucasian Mountain Republic, primary education was conducted in Circassian language (Jaimoukha, 2001, pp. 251-261).

A language policy was devised to facilitate Sovietization of the different peoples and nations encompassed by the vast empire at the beginning of Soviet. Also in 1921,

Russification was abandoned officially and instead national languages and cultures were promoted by Bolsheviks. This time was the first time that Circassians could develop their language policy as a prelude to elevating its status to state language, alongside Russian. The ideological bases of the Soviet nationality policies and the process of nationalization implemented in the republics had a rather paradoxical character as far as on the one hand the Soviet Union entitled the nationalities with a well-defined political and territorial status which led to a process of nation-building where political and territorial units were created on the basis of nations or ethnicities that constituted themselves as historical cultural communities during the Tsarist period (Lepretre, 2002: p. 01).

During this time, some linguists worked hard to promote the status of Circassian and to iron out any anomalies in its two alphabets. Therefore, some conferences were held for this purpose and finally in 1930, the New Alphabet Committee of the Nationalities Soviets made an attempt to unify not only Circassian alphabets but also those of other North Caucasian languages. This was a result of lack of methodology and also teachers were poorly trained, the majority doubling as instructors of other subjects. In Circassian schools, there were no native language instructors with higher education. This sorry condition was the result of, 'the frivolous attitude of the local regime towards these native languages' (Karcha, 1958: p. 113).

The Soviet language policy in the Circassian republics had resulted in functional bilingualism, especially among the young generation. Russian authorities never made systematic attempts to perpetuate native language instruction for Circassians even through the middle school level. At the end of 80s, Circassian was taught in the first few grades. School is a major means of instilling the native culture (Jaimoukha, 2001: pp. 251-260).

By the beginning of the 1990s Russian had become the dominant language in Circassia, even within the family, the last refuge of the native tongue. Jaimoukha (2001: p.261) brings some arguments in this regards: "This perceived threat of linguistic extinction and the demise of the Soviet System combined to make the Circassians more vocal in their demands for more autonomy. According to the 1992 Law on Education of the Russian Federation 'citizens of the Russian Federation have the right to receive primary education in their native language. They also have the right to select the language of instruction.' The Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1992 guarantees cultural self-determination and the right of local organizations to set up educational institutions to promote native language and culture".

Even nowadays, there are many difficulties in front of governmental and private educational bodies. In the universities of these republics, all subjects are taught Circassian language and literature in Russian. The recent change was internet and social media, where

offers the Circassians the perfect means to convey their languages and culture to the world. Their history and culture have been shrouded in romanticism and misinformation for a very long time specifically among the Diaspora. The Circassians diaspora, somehow have been divorced from their original culture for more than a century, have undergone tremendous linguistic and cultural assimilation in their adoptive societies. Nevertheless, in recent years, the issue of language education in a culturally diverse society has become prominent on the research agenda in Circassia, after having served as an important subject of public-academic discourse.



## 7 Chapter - Conclusion

### 7.1 General Point of View

The North Caucasus is a region of physical and societal extremes, where a mountainous landscape has led to varying degrees of isolation for its inhabitants in terms of people's linguistic, ethnic, religious, and political development. This landscape has resulted in a great diversity of ethnolinguistic groups in the region today. Each ethnolinguistic group's development has yielded separate languages, cultural customs, and senses of homeland and territorial belonging, which have in turn factored in the construction of many unique identities. Influences from outside the North Caucasus have historically been present, as various powers not native to the region have sought to include it into their imperial folds. Thus, the contemporary cultural and political landscapes of the North Caucasus exhibit *Russian*, *Turkic*, and *Persian* legacies, which have in turn influenced identity development (Grant, 2005). This chapter's goal is to conclude and summarize all previous discussions about the '*Circassian Question*' regarding the cultural and linguistic identity. It will look at the ethnolinguistic identity and how Circassians identify themselves through their historical background. Examining the persons and factors in the historical sequence that contributed to the creation of different identities throughout Circassian history is important to understand the formation of linguistic and cultural identity in the Caucasus from the mid-nineteenth century to modern times. To define '*Circassian Question*', the different groups will be examined in terms of their perspectives of ethnic, national, linguistic and cultural identity within the ethnolinguistic concept of Circassia. This approach was implemented through nation building, religious repression, linguistic assimilation, and shifting ethnic population dynamics.

However, location factors differ in course of scale and assumed the meaning of homeland, and as it is shown in previous chapters, can have an effect on one's sense of ethnolinguistic identity. Exploring place-based identity factors, territorial conjunction, and cognitive conceptions of homeland illuminate how places are built and given meaning in both the contexts of Circassia and in the North Caucasus in general (Thelen, 2010). Thus, based on ethnic-national identity, linguistic-cultural identity, and having a common homeland, those have formed people who have different dialects with a common denominator who would

respond to the Circassian Question in their history according to the ethnolinguistic phenomena.

## 7.2 Formation Factors of Circassian Identity

The Circassian society had been tribal in structure; therefore, the main identity of Circassian comes from their tribal and kinship background. Alongside, there are a lot of overlapping layers of self-conception, but there are by no means confined to, language, religious faith, culture, history, and traditional homeland which I can call it in this term 'ethnolinguistic' identity. In the post-Soviet era, discussions of ethnic and national identity have often brought out many political debates in the new emerging countries and nations. Afterword, 'identity' in its present visualization has a double feeling. It refers at the identical time to social classifications and to the sources of a sole's self-esteem or dignity.

Nevertheless, in my point of view, Circassian identity has found the unit meaning through their history that characterized by linguistic & literature, indigenous cultures such as customs, traditions, music & dance, economy, class system & social structure, religion & belief and even their cuisine. Another factor in the formation of Circassian identity is immigration and having a diaspora. Therefore, in this case, the Circassian diaspora has had long-term influences on their community's identity.

For Circassians as a diasporic community, was the idea of returning to the homeland. Many Circassians in the Ottoman Empire kept ties between their origin land and, when conditions allowed, often returned (Meyer, 2007: p. 16). The first return demands started in large numbers in the early 1860s. Sometimes, these requests occurred just after months of immigration and sometimes after a range of several years. Often, immigrants applied to Russian consulates elsewhere to return or simply showed up at the Russian border requesting to return to Russia for staying. Sometimes people returned because of the intensity conditions in the Ottoman Lands, sometimes to work in the Caucasus after taking an education within the Ottoman Empire, and sometimes for personal, family and financial matters (Ibid: p. 21). For Circassians in Turkey, the *War of Independence* and the *Cerkes Ethem Affair* carries remarkable importance for the diaspora. There were different groups that followed different ideologies within the *Turkish War of Independence*. There were two basic groups: one who was supporting the independence movement with the *Kemalist* ideas, and one who followed the *Sultan* and *Caliphate* idea. These two groups will be concealed in detail. Moreover, there was one group that tried to create an independent state in Ottoman lands (Gingeras, 2011: p.124). Their devotion to Islam did not prevent them from



collaborating with Rums and Armenians on this issue, and for the group, there was no need to embrace *Ottomanism* or *Islamism* as an identity (Ibid: p.130).

The peak point in the historical processes of identity formation was the breakup of the Soviet Union and the free access to territories of the homeland, many of whom have now traveled to the Caucasus, some intending to settle permanently and it means that the identity still is shaping (Shami, 2000: pp.178-181). In addition, the symbols that Circassians hold central to their sense of collective identity are derived from these historical experiences (Shami, 2009: p. 156).

Most of the factors that I mentioned in this thesis were a relatively under-researched ethnic and linguistic group. To understand the formation of the Circassian identity within the Ottoman and Russian Empires, there are some pillars each of which has its own effect over the identity that this thesis based upon. The first and most important conclusion is the Circassian identity or diaspora as a historical phenomenon with its positive achievements and limitations, shaping and reshaping within the constantly changing political limits that have been set by the politicians and the ruling elite. Within this changing discourse, Circassians identity could not manage to create a homogeneous block to represent the group and to uphold the problems of the people in diaspora, to create a bridge role between the diaspora and homeland, or to influence the policy in lieu towards the right of the ethnic minorities in the North Caucasus with their relations to Russia (Ilgener, 2013: pp.137-140).

The last important conclusion regarding the identity is the homeland for the Circassians, and in the Circassian case homeland are a dynamic construction of political developments, memories, narratives, and various perceptions of individuals as to the nature of 'homeland'. Examining the ways that the diaspora imagined a homeland and Circassian community and the internal dynamics of the people are crucial for social science on diaspora and nationalism. Circassians, in this term, form a community in lack of state structure, and even lack of any political or mythical leader.

After all factors and circumstances are considered, Circassians identify themselves with different historical events. The exile is the most prominent one, and Circassians should annotate not just feeling the grief of the event but also teach this history to the next generations and the other groups in Turkey where they all live together peacefully.

These concepts are vital for understanding how places and their meanings are constructed. In order to explore the notion of homeland, a critical conception for ethnoterritorial identity, it is important to examine how place and its many meanings can develop into attachments that eventually lead to classification and recognition of territory as belonging to a certain

group of people or a nation. According to *Max Weber* (1922), in order to create an ethnic identity, groups must display a common language, a belief that they are descended from common ancestors, a feeling of ethnic affinity, and a shared belief system. He mentions that: “The belief in common descent, in combination with a similarity of customs, is likely to promote the spread of the activities of one part of an ethnic group among the rest, since the awareness of ethnic identity furthers imitation. This is especially true of the propaganda of religious groups” (Guibernau & Rex, 1997: p.22).

These are the main conclusions that the thesis has reached, but there are different subjects that are not covered deeply in this thesis. One of them is the Russian policy towards the North Caucasus.

### **7.3 Emergence Factors of Circassian Question**

Historically, the exile and deportation of the Circassians from their historical homeland, in the aftermath of the Caucasian War toward the Ottoman Empire, was the important factor of Circassian Question. These historical processes have made the Diasporic Community; have shaped the Circassian Question in term of linguistic and cultural identity in the following year in the Exile era (Ilgener, 2013).

From such a perspective, the Circassian Diaspora is an instance of exploring how boundaries of knowledge pertaining to identity, inclusion, exclusion, ethnicity, past and present are challenged, deconstructed, reclaimed and reconstructed within the processes of globalization. By means of these processes, Circassian activists and elites, since the exile, have challenged, changed and problematized the boundaries of knowledge to their identity, their rights, their history and their unity in general (Brandell, Carlson and Çetrez, 2015: pp. 145–146).

From my point of view, the Circassian Question is formatted and is changed by diasporic communities and Circassians from the exile until nowadays. It deals with how the Circassians redefine and transform the knowledge of their own identity, history and diasporic experience in the post-Soviet conjuncture. Actually, using the term of the Circassian Question is showed up in the process of a nation formation since 1864 as the main axis of their identity, which its main part was language and culture. The main factors of this formation are the Circassian Exile or better to call it Muhajir Memory, then lost the homeland in their new life and furthermore, the first taste of independent in 1917 under the name of Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus, role of Diaspora and their activities, rising nationalism and patriotism among elites and young generations, and finally transforming

ethnic identity into national identity almost in two century under the terminology of ethnolinguistic.

Generally, the Circassian Question has lately managed to enter the wider public sphere of Russian mainstream media, following a number of years of circulation in the transnational sphere of the Internet. Particularly in connection with the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014, that has drawn wider attention in the Russian media. Along of the Sochi Olympics, the Circassian Question has been raised to a higher step on the international sphere as an equal to the situation of 1864 when international media followed the conflict and war in Circassia. The Circassian Question was a term that also achieved considerable international application in the 19th century when the media, followed the long war in the Caucasus and Circassia against the exceeding Russian Imperial Army. Zhemukhov (2012: p. 505), the Circassian researcher believes that despite the wide-spreading use of this term, the Circassian Question is seldom defined. Then he says that according to one recent definition, the Circassian Question of today consists of three main elements: recognition of the nineteenth-century war and forced exile to the Ottoman Empire as an act of genocide, repatriation from the diasporic societies to the North Caucasus and homeland, and the establishment of a joint Circassian Republic. According to an analysis of Zhemoukhov, five main strands of the contemporary Circassian movement can be identified with nationalists at one end of the spectrum, proceeding to sovereigntists, centrists, and culturalists, and ending with accommodationists at the other end (Zhemukhov, 2012: p. 511). Some establishments and activists go one-level further and remark their terminal purpose as the recreating of Circassia as an independent state.

During 2010, the Circassian Question received increased international attention following new interest from neighboring Georgia. This was widely regarded as a reaction to the war with Russia in 2008 and Russia's subsequent recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. In 2010, another Georgian initiative and self-motivation were to appoint a visa-free regime for Russian citizens registered or born in the North Caucasian republics, which was labeled as a seduction by the Russian side (Hansen, 2014: p.74).

The Circassian Question was appointed latter on the international agenda in 2010 when Circassian diaspora institutions and NGO's lobbied in Estonia for recognition of the Circassian genocide. In October 2010, *Tunne Kelam*, an Estonian member of the European Parliament, declared that he would raise the Circassian Question at the next audition in the human rights session of European Parliament. *Mark Mickelson*, another Estonian Member

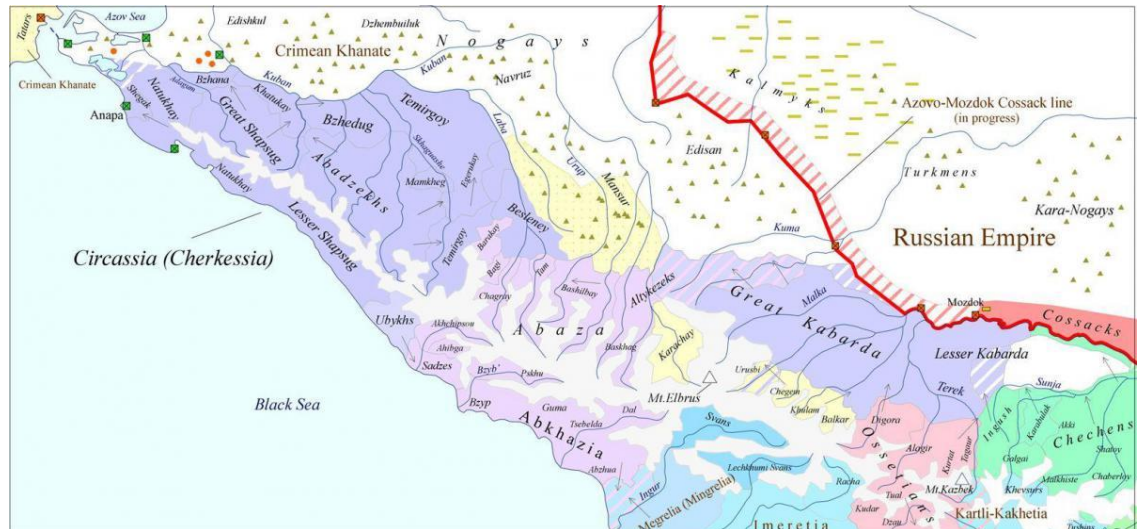
of Parliament, promised to hold the 'Circassian Question' on the agenda in the European Parliament (Hansen, 2014: p.75).

With this background and summaries, I think the perspective of Circassian Question is clear and it will be recognized by world society as a nation and as a question in the term of Eurasian ethnolinguistic. By observing the level of affinity attached to various places among different ethnic groups based upon their geographical location, it should be possible to gain insight into the region's contemporary meaning of Circassian Question, that is to say, how the young generation see these territorial constructions, after their creation and existence through Soviet and Russian Federal control. Common language and culture will be developed with the emphasis on the unification of the written language by the elite, civil society, and cultural activists, and we will see the formation of Cultural linguistic in the future.

## 8 Chapter - Maps

### 8.1 (Map. 01) Circassian Tribal Composition 1774-1780

(Source: <http://abkhazworld.com/aw/abkhazians/language/648-abkhazo-adyghean-languages-chirikba>)



### 8.2 (Map. 02) North Caucasus 1767-1783 by Andrew Andersen

(Source: <https://andrewandersenwriter.wordpress.com/2017/03/22/caucasus-russian-atrocities-in-the-north-18th-20th-centuries/>)



### 8.3 (Map. 03) Circassia in the new division by Walid Hakuz

(Source: <https://tamboosh.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/4e315-occupiedcircassia.jpg?w\u003d820\u0026h\u003d341>)



### 8.4 (Map. 04) Topography of North Caucasus by Geopolitical Futures

(Source: [https://geopoliticalfutures.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/north-caucasus-topography.jpg?utm\\_source=GPF+-+Paid+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=f99b47de48-](https://geopoliticalfutures.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/north-caucasus-topography.jpg?utm_source=GPF+-+Paid+Newsletter&utm_campaign=f99b47de48-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_Deep_Dive&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_72b76c0285-f99b47de48-240022413)

[RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_Deep\\_Dive&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_72b76c0285-f99b47de48-240022413](https://geopoliticalfutures.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/north-caucasus-topography.jpg?utm_source=GPF+-+Paid+Newsletter&utm_campaign=f99b47de48-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_Deep_Dive&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_72b76c0285-f99b47de48-240022413))





## 8.5 (Map. 05) Geopolitical situation of North Caucasus by GRID-Arendal

(Source: [http://old.grida.no/graphicslib/detail/the-caucasus-ecoregion-topographic-map\\_a6b6](http://old.grida.no/graphicslib/detail/the-caucasus-ecoregion-topographic-map_a6b6))



## 8.6 (Map. 06) Administrative Division of North Caucasus 1929-1932 by Arthur Tsutsiev

(Source: <https://abovyangroup.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/tsutsiev-full-map.jpg>)



## 8.7 (Map. 07) Linguistic Distribution of Circassians by Christian Bakken

(Source: <https://apps.cndls.georgetown.edu/projects/borders/items/show/283>)



## 8.8 (Map. 08) Maykop Culture in Bronze Age

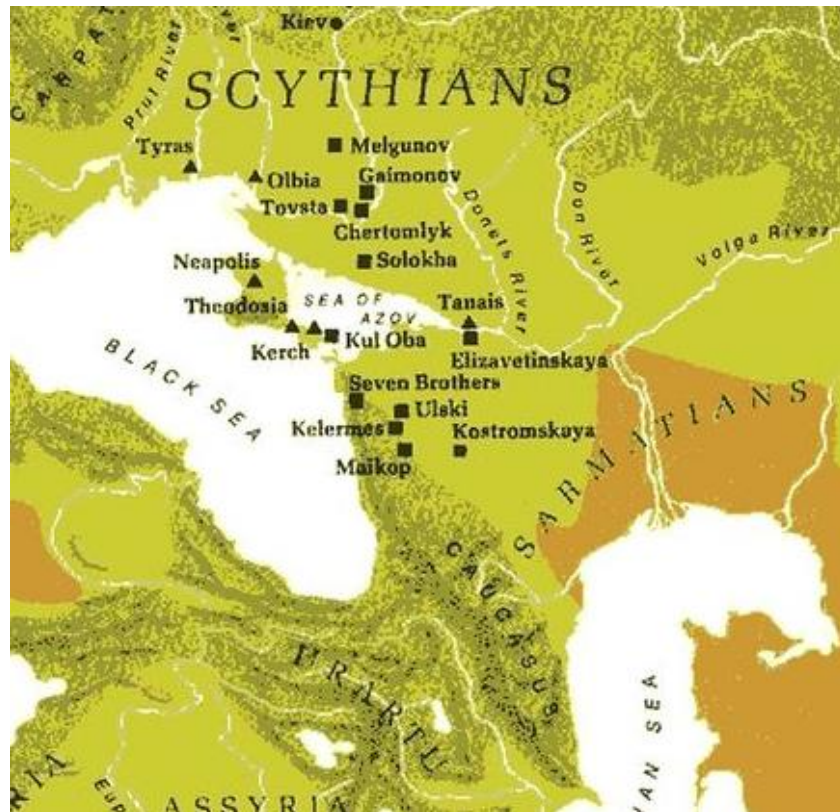
(Source: <https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Maykop+culture>)





## 8.9 (Map. 09) Sites of Scythians – Sarmatians in North Caucasus

(Source: <http://drakenberg.weebly.com/scythians.html>)



## 8.10 (Map. 10) Hun in North Caucasus

(Source: <https://tariganter.wordpress.com/2016/01/23/the-turkish-jewish-khazar/>)



## 8.11 (Map. 11) Khazar Khaganate in North Caucasus

(Source: [https://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/imagenes\\_sociopol/khazar03\\_03.jpg](https://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/imagenes_sociopol/khazar03_03.jpg))



## 8.12 (Map. 12) Queen Tamar's realms

(Source: [https://artemisiasroyalden.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/672px-geor\\_tamro1.gif](https://artemisiasroyalden.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/672px-geor_tamro1.gif))



## 8.13 (Map. 13) Mongol Invasion of Caucasus in 13<sup>th</sup> Century

(Source: <http://mapwalk2013.clevelandhistory.org/hulegu/>)





## 8.14 (Map. 14) Mamluk Dynasty

(Source: <http://epicworldhistory.blogspot.com/2012/06/mamluk-dynasties-in-egypt.html>)



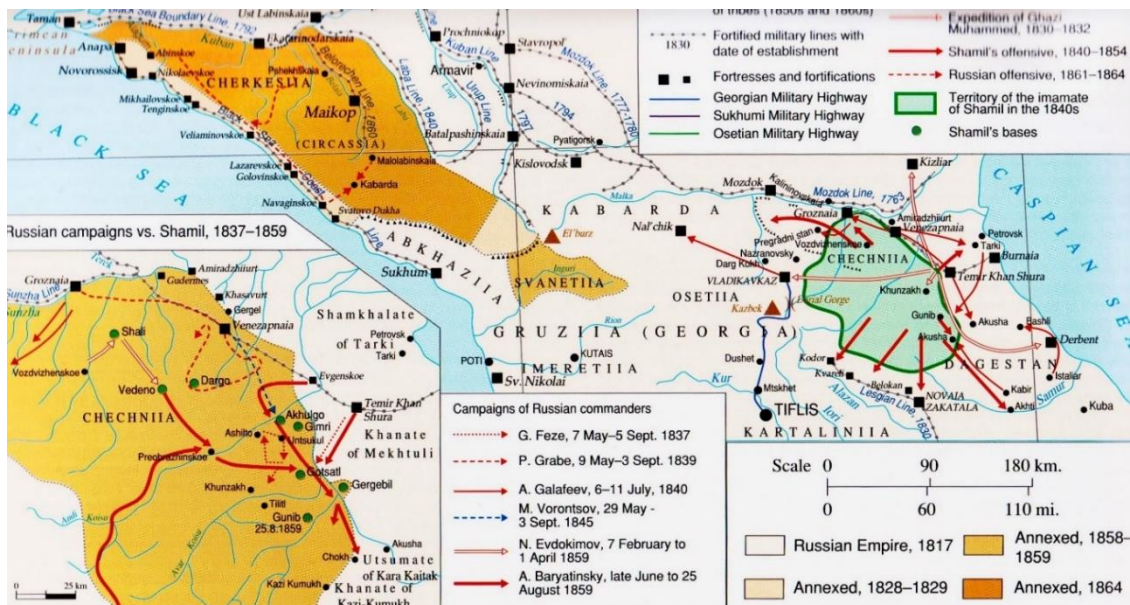
## 8.15 (Map. 15) Russo-Ottoman War 1735–1739

(Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russo-Turkish\\_War\\_of\\_1735-1739.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russo-Turkish_War_of_1735-1739.svg))



## 8.16 (Map. 16) Caucasian War in 19<sup>th</sup> Century

(Source: <https://www.edmaps.com/html/caucasus.html>)





## 8.17 (Map. 17) Caucasian Military Line in 1858

(Source: <http://peripheralhistories.blogspot.com/2017/05/russian-little-russian-hardly-russian.html>)



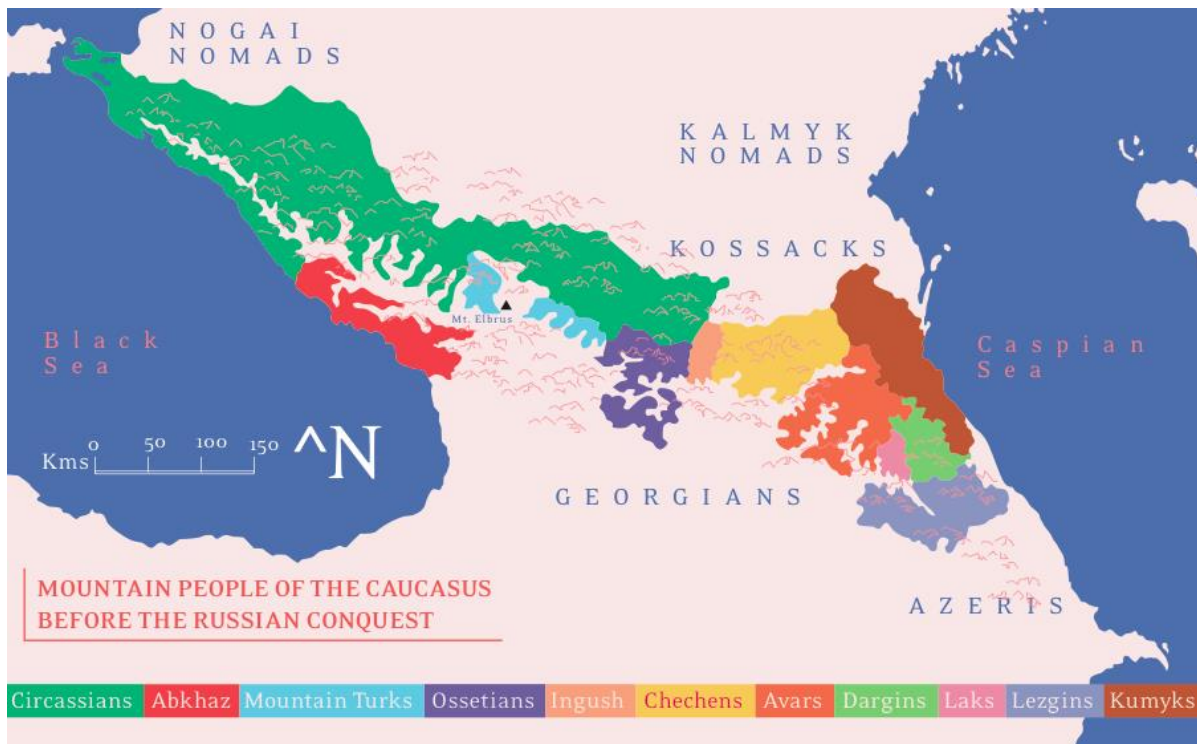
## 8.18 (Map. 18) Russian Expansion in the Caucasus in 1783-1878 by Andrew Andersen

(Source: <http://euromaidanpress.com/2017/02/16/the-unsung-lament-russian-atrocities-in-caucasus/>)



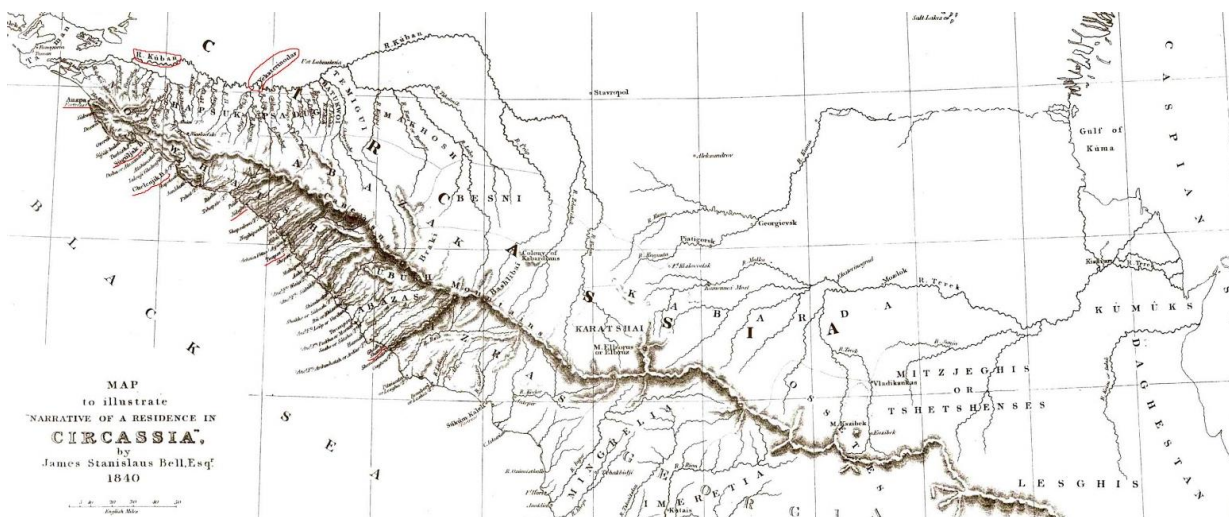
## 8.19 (Map. 19) Caucasians before Russian Conquest in 19<sup>th</sup> Century

(Source: [https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/1xn5ny/ethnic\\_groups\\_of\\_the\\_caucasus\\_before\\_the\\_russian/](https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/1xn5ny/ethnic_groups_of_the_caucasus_before_the_russian/))



## 8.20 (Map. 20) Circassia in 1840 by James Bell

(Source: <http://www.bivouac.ru/2016/07/chernomorskoye-poberegje-kavkaza.html>)





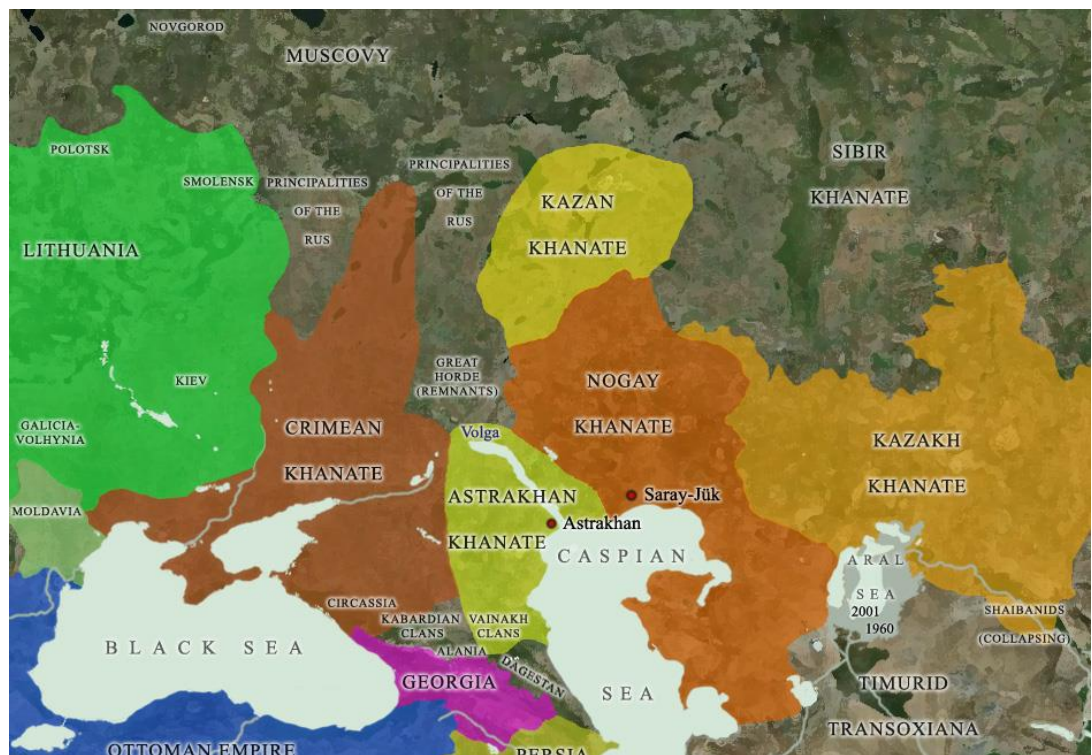
## 8.21 (Map. 21) Circassian Exile to Ottoman Empire

(Source: <http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Circassia>)



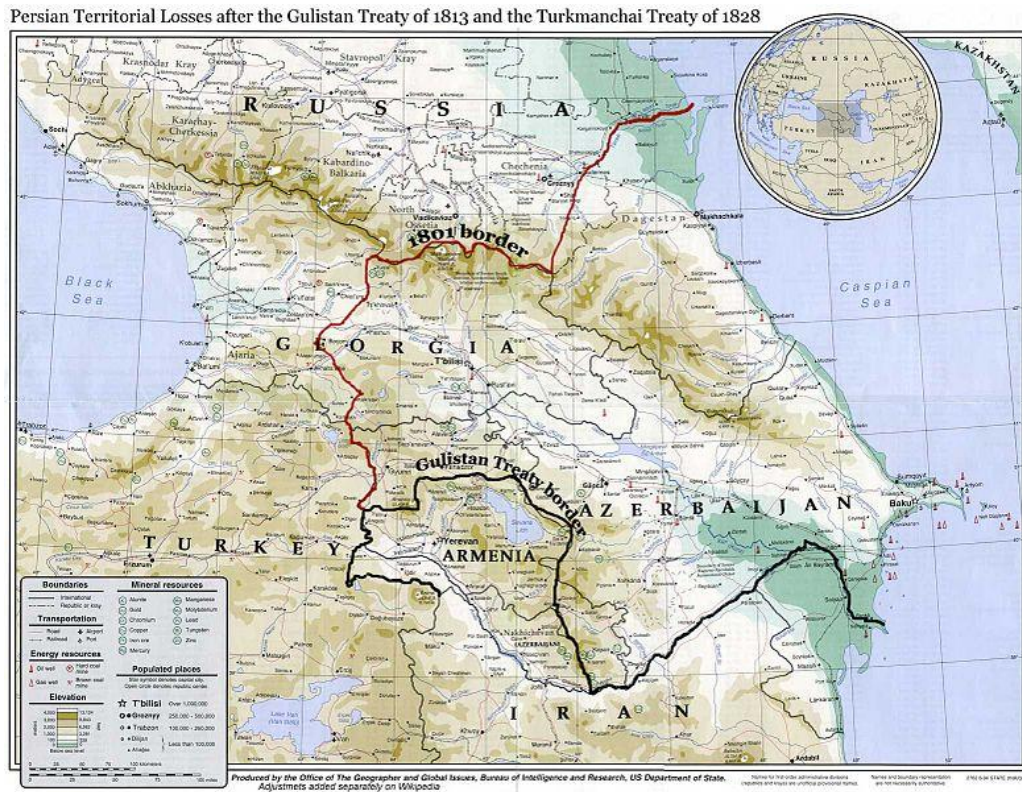
## 8.22 (Map. 22) Turkic Kingdoms around Caspian Sea in 15-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries

(Source: [http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/images/FarEast/CentralAsia/Map\\_CentralAsia\\_AD1500\\_max.jpg](http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/images/FarEast/CentralAsia/Map_CentralAsia_AD1500_max.jpg))



## 8.23 (Map. 23) Russo – Persian Wars's results Map in the Caucasus

(Source: <http://www.iranreview.org/file/cms/files/782px-Gulistan-Treaty.jpg>)





## 8.25 (Map. 25) Caucasus in 1917-1919

(Source: <https://www.euratlas.net/history/hisatlas/ussr/191917CC.jpg>)



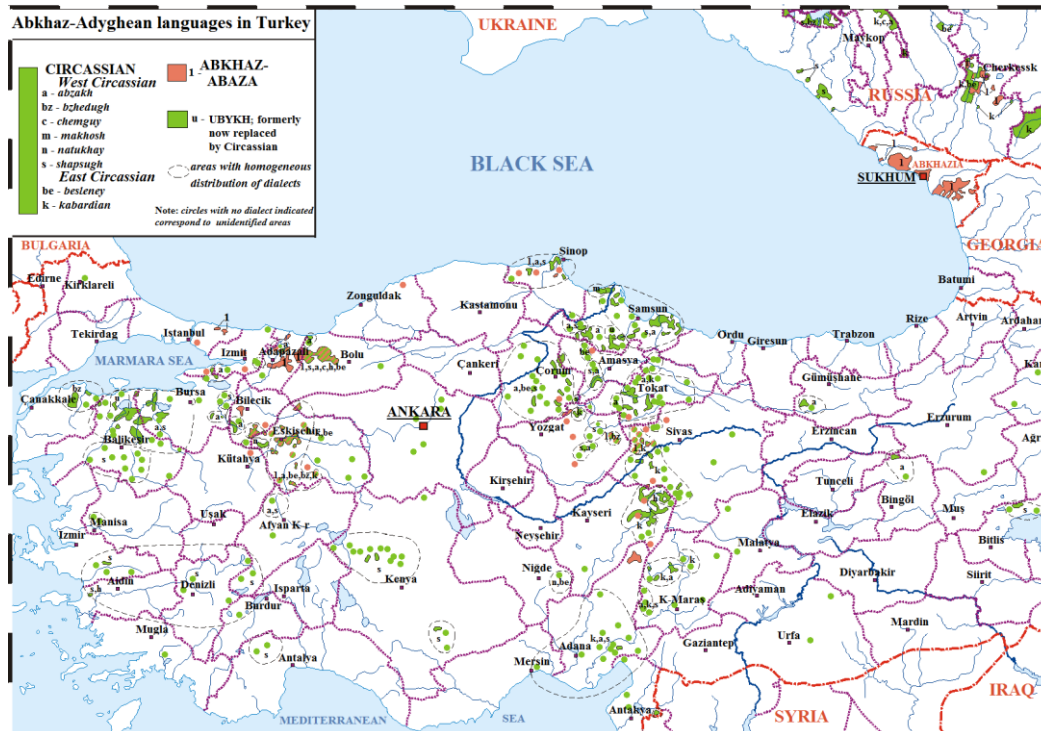
## 8.26 (Map. 26) Mountain Republic by stampworldhistory

(Source: <http://www.stampworldhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Mountain-republic.png>)



### 8.27 (Map. 27) Abkhaz-Adygheans in Turkey

(Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/df/CircassianinTu.png/300px-CircassianinTu.png>)



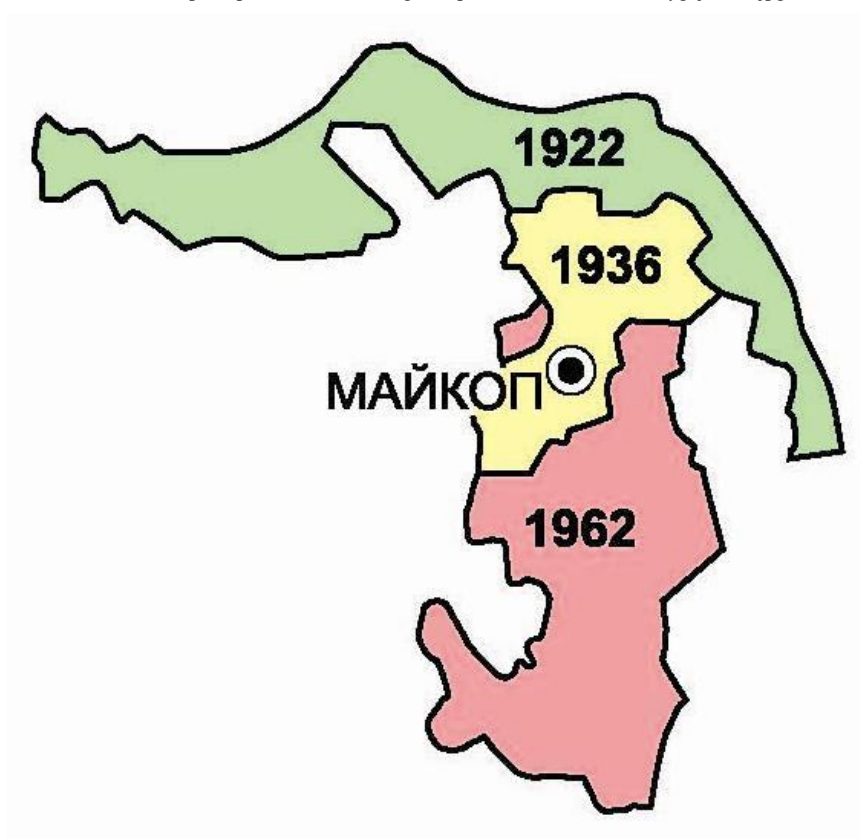
### 8.28 (Map. 28) North Caucasus administrative in 1920's

(Source: <http://www.wikiwand.com/ru>)



## 8.29 (Map. 29) Adyghea Autonomous Oblast

(Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/Adygheja-rost.jpg>)



## 8.30 (Map. 30) Caucasus Emirate

(Source: <https://gordonhahn.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/kartaimaratakavkaz.jpg>)





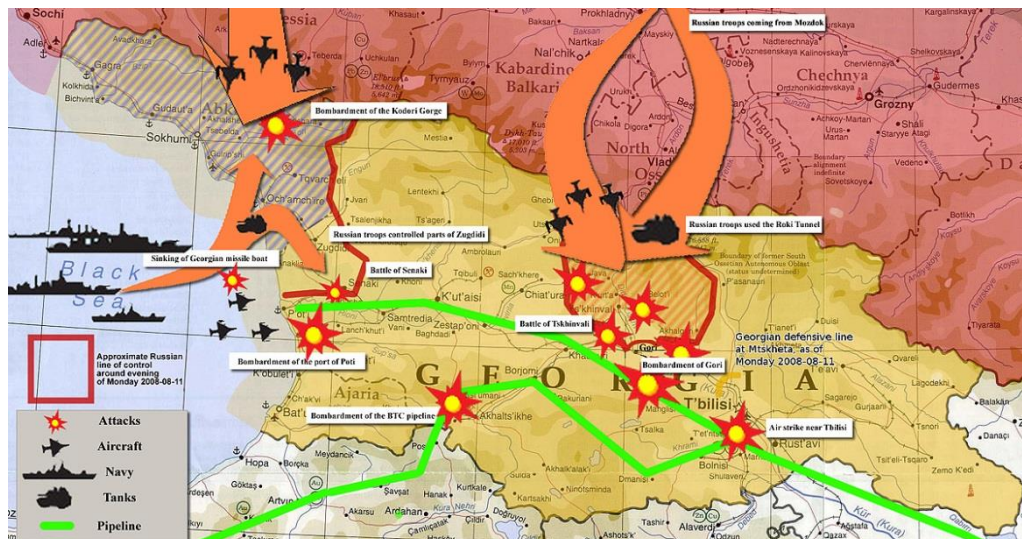
### 8.31 (Map. 31) Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

(Source: [https://vignette.wikia.nocookie.net/cybernations/images/6/63/Chechnya\\_map.jpg/revision/latest?cb=20110706194258](https://vignette.wikia.nocookie.net/cybernations/images/6/63/Chechnya_map.jpg/revision/latest?cb=20110706194258))



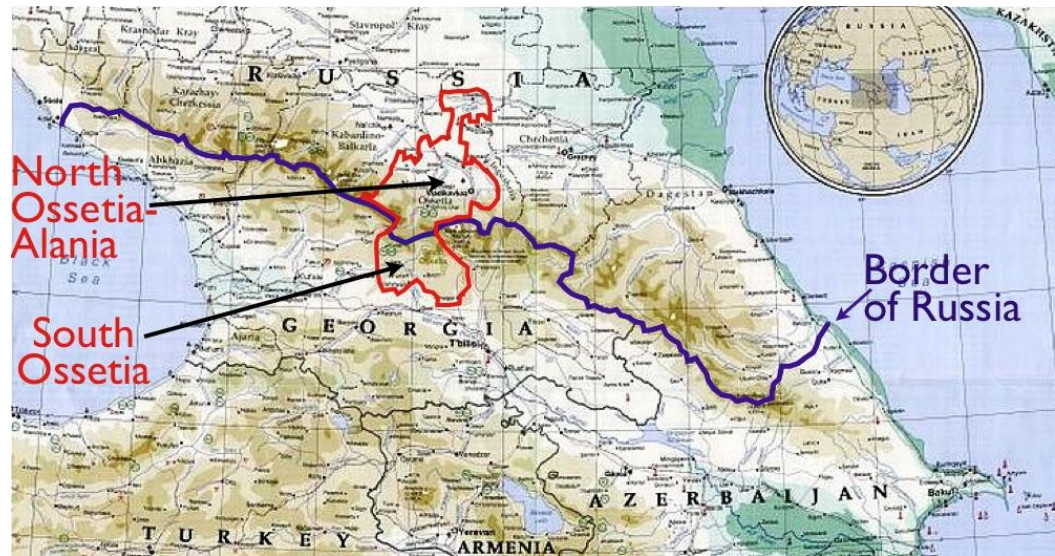
### 8.32 (Map. 32) Russian – Georgian War Map

(Source: [http://i.despiteborders.com/wp-content/uploads/georgia\\_war-velka.jpg](http://i.despiteborders.com/wp-content/uploads/georgia_war-velka.jpg))



### 8.33 (Map. 33) Situation of North-South Ossetia

(Source: [http://geocurrents.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Map\\_Of\\_Ossetia\\_and\\_Caucasus.jpg](http://geocurrents.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Map_Of_Ossetia_and_Caucasus.jpg))







## 9 Chapter - Figures

### 9.1 (Figure. 01) Flag of Circassia

(Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/16/Flag\\_of\\_Adygea.svg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/16/Flag_of_Adygea.svg))



### 9.2 (Figure. 02) Circassian Traditional Clothing by Andynapso

(Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d5/CircassianPhoto.jpg>)



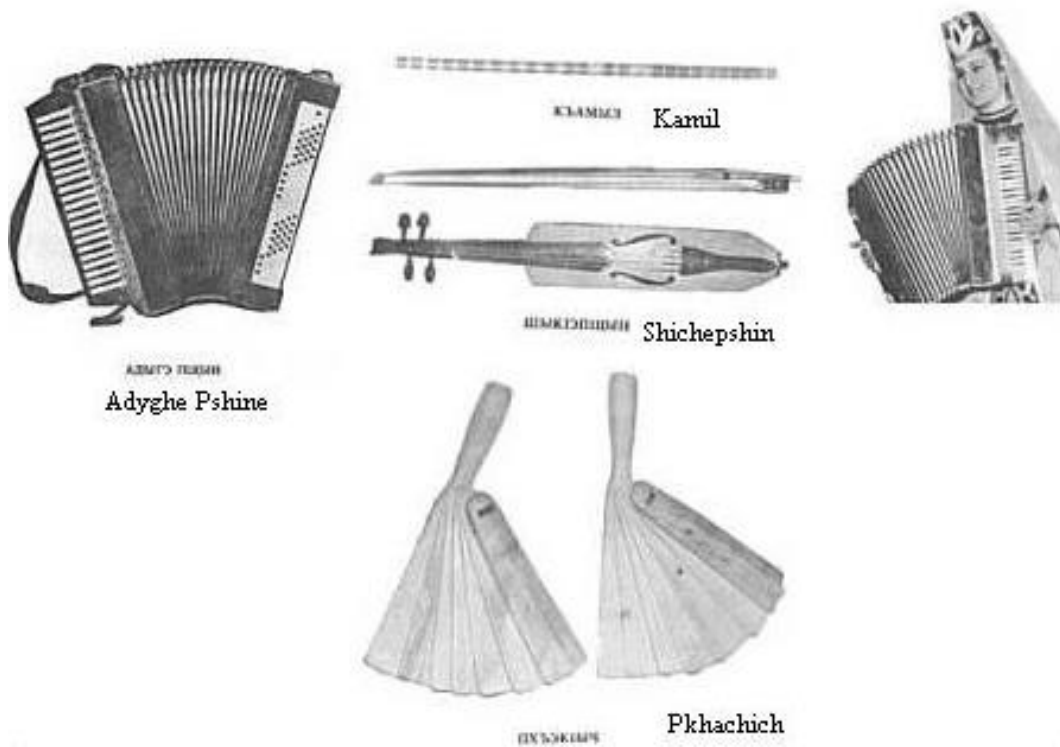
### 9.3 (Figure. 03) Mount Elbrus by Maks Alpert

(Source: <https://tr.sputniknews.com/foto/201507231016712553/>)



#### 9.4 (Figure. 04) Circassian Music instruments

(Source: <http://toroyloco.blogspot.com/2010/07/adyghe.html>)





## 9.5 (Figure. 05) Circassian Dance

(Source: <http://e-onomastics.blogspot.com/2013/03/international-conference-problems-of.html>)



## 9.6 (Figure. 06) Silver reindeer figurine the Koban Culture

(Source: <https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/314407617708166964/>)



**9.7 (Figure. 07) Golden ox figurine found in the Maykop kurgan in Hermitage Museum**

(Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/20336635790535848/>)



**9.8 (Figure. 08) Tamar the Great Fresco at the church of Dormition in Vardzia**

(Source: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/d4/0e/7a/d40e7a9ff15963eb77f1f52cd507f2ad.jpg>)





### 9.9 (Figure. 09) Picture of Crimean War - Episode of Sebastopol Siege

(Source: <http://historylearning.com/the-crimean-war-1853-1856/>)



### 9.10 (Figure. 10) Picture of Murid War - Episode of Akhatle Battle in 1841

(Source: <http://oshten.blogspot.com/2012/01/21-1763-1864.html>)



### 9.11 (Figure. 11) Picture of Sefer Bey Zanuko in 1845

(Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/db/Circassian\\_prince.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/db/Circassian_prince.jpg))



### 9.12 (Figure. 12) Picture of Circassian Envoys to England - Hadji Hassan Effendi (Left) Constan Okhoo Ismael Effendi (Right) in 1862

(Source: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/effendi.html>)





### 9.13 (Figure. 12) Photo of Prince Adam Czartoryski by Felix Nadar in 1861

(Source: <https://superhistoria.pl/xix-wiek/34269/Ksiaze-Adam-Jerzy-Czartoryski-rosyjski-minister-i-polski-patriota.html>)



### 9.14 (Figure. 13) Picture of Michał Czajkowski

(Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Micha%C5%82\\_Czajkowski\\_%281804-1886%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Micha%C5%82_Czajkowski_%281804-1886%29.jpg))



### 9.15 (Figure. 14) Picture of Count Mikhail Tarielovich Loris-Melikov I

(Source: [https://www.runivers.ru/images/date/2010\\_february/24/s.jpg](https://www.runivers.ru/images/date/2010_february/24/s.jpg))



### 9.16 (Figure. 15) Flag - Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus

(Source: <https://vignette.wikia.nocookie.net/future/images/6/6e/NorthernCaucasus.png/revision/latest/scale-to-width-down/2000?cb=20180502024950>)



### 9.17 (Figure. 16) Picture of General Anton Denikin

(Source: [https://russiapedia.rt.com/files/prominent-russians/military/anton-denikin/anton-denikin\\_5-t.jpg](https://russiapedia.rt.com/files/prominent-russians/military/anton-denikin/anton-denikin_5-t.jpg))



### 9.18 (Figure. 17) Picture of Russian propaganda in Circassia - 450 years together

(Source: my field studies)



### 9.19 (Figure. 18) Flag – Confederation of Mountain People of Caucasus

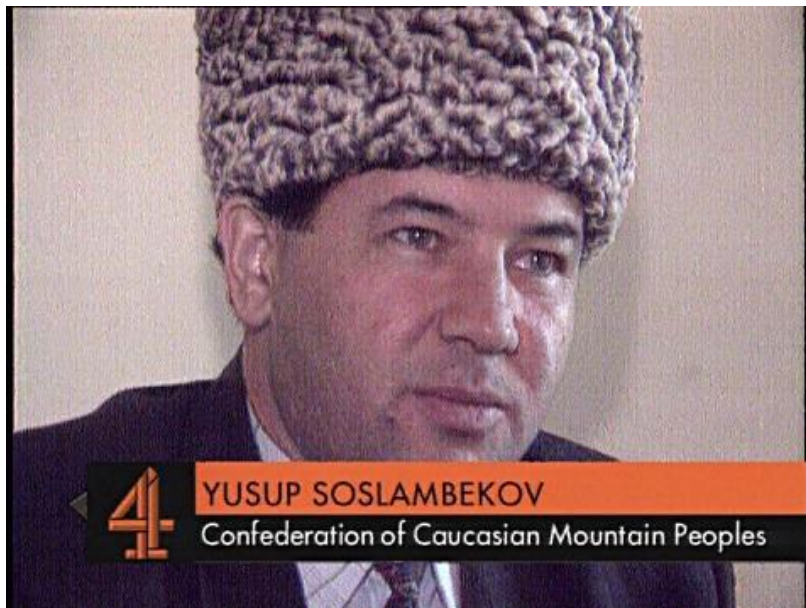
(Source: <https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoyvizjW3WknFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/1/m/KHnK.png>)



### 9.20 (Figure. 19) Picture of Yusup Soslambekov

(Source:

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjnp\\_2kJLdAhVml4sKHewKDh0QjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gettyimages.com%2Fvideos%2Fchechnya%3Fpage%3D2&psig=AOvVaw14Jlrp2OKQUAm-z5\\_holr6&ust=1535627561970980](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjnp_2kJLdAhVml4sKHewKDh0QjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gettyimages.com%2Fvideos%2Fchechnya%3Fpage%3D2&psig=AOvVaw14Jlrp2OKQUAm-z5_holr6&ust=1535627561970980))





## 9.21 (Figure. 20) Picture of Musa Shanibov

(Source:

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiBjfrag6JfdAhVJY1AKHbdZA\\_oQjRx6BAgBEAU&url=http%3A%2F%2Fimperiya.by%2Fvideo%2FCfgvcGAv8J4%2Fmusa-shanibov-lektsii-na-at.html&psig=AOvVaw3rusYqxShByziBV5xdOhvP&ust=1535822881530649](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiBjfrag6JfdAhVJY1AKHbdZA_oQjRx6BAgBEAU&url=http%3A%2F%2Fimperiya.by%2Fvideo%2FCfgvcGAv8J4%2Fmusa-shanibov-lektsii-na-at.html&psig=AOvVaw3rusYqxShByziBV5xdOhvP&ust=1535822881530649))



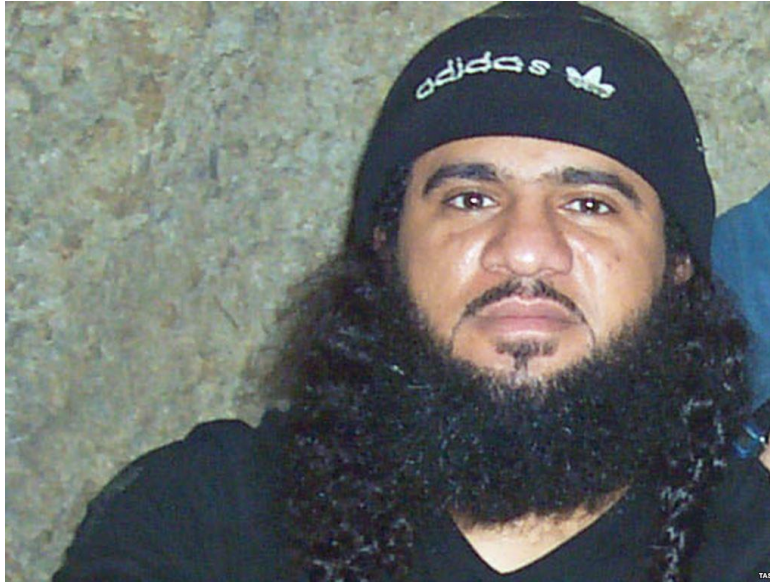
## 9.22 (Figure. 21) Picture of Dzhokhar Dudayev

(Source: <https://alchetron.com/cdn/dzhokhar-dudayev-a28a9c09-4058-44f6-963a-e46e982bf3c-resize-750.jpeg>)



### 9.23 (Figure. 22) Picture of Amir Khattab

(Source: [http://gdb.rferl.org/5E342FDB-DB95-4678-B049-085D5B28F0C1\\_mw1024\\_s\\_n.jpg](http://gdb.rferl.org/5E342FDB-DB95-4678-B049-085D5B28F0C1_mw1024_s_n.jpg))



### 9.24 (Figure. 23) Picture of Shamil Basayev

(Source: <http://en.crimerrussia.com/upload/iblock/90a/basaev.jpg>)



**9.25 (Figure. 24) Picture of Circassian activists again Winter Olympics of Sochi**

(Source: [https://farm5.static.flickr.com/4003/4392798548\\_29db356d21.jpg](https://farm5.static.flickr.com/4003/4392798548_29db356d21.jpg))



**9.26 (Figure. 25) Picture of Circassian activists about Genocide in Turkey**

(Source: <http://www.geocurrents.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Circassian-Protest.png>)





## 9.27 (Figure. 26) Picture of Circassian activists about Genocide

(Source: [http://i.edn.turner.com/ireport/sm/prod/2011/06/20/WE00591313/1739163/CircassiaPlaceofGenocidebydibabj-1739163\\_lg.jpg](http://i.edn.turner.com/ireport/sm/prod/2011/06/20/WE00591313/1739163/CircassiaPlaceofGenocidebydibabj-1739163_lg.jpg))



## 10 Chapter - Tables

### 10.1 (Table. 01) Current Population of Circassia

(Source: [http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-wRtZsbobbMo/UF2spWZ31II/AAAAAAAAADc/zNi4csyCot8/s1600/DemocraticCircassiaTable.jpg)











[wRtZsbobbMo/UF2spWZ31II/AAAAAAAAADc/zNi4csyCot8/s1600/DemocraticCircassiaTable.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-wRtZsbobbMo/UF2spWZ31II/AAAAAAAAADc/zNi4csyCot8/s1600/DemocraticCircassiaTable.jpg))

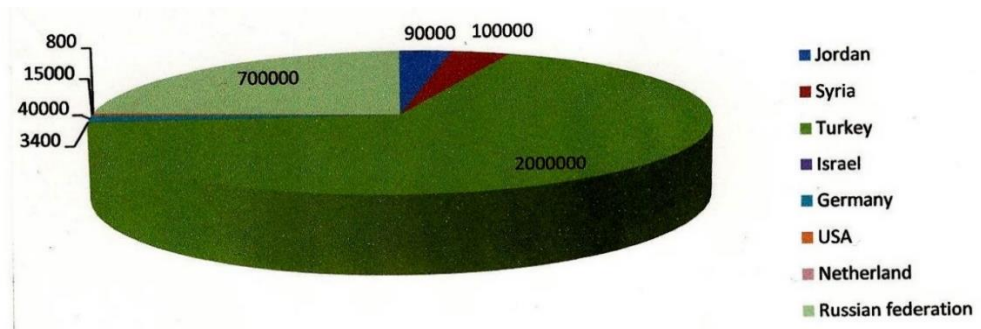
Administrative Unit	Population				
	Circassians		Non-Circassians		Total
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%	
Adyghea	109.619	26%	330.377	74%	439.996
Krasnodarskiy Kray <sup>(1)</sup>	17.673	0,95%	1.828.564	99,05%	1.846.237
Karachayevo-Cherkessia	287.709 <sup>(2)</sup>	61%	190.150	39%	477.859
Kabardino-Balkaria	601.505 <sup>(3)</sup>	70%	258.434	30%	859.939
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.016.506</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>2.607.525</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>3.624.031</b>

### 10.2 (Table. 02) Population of Circassian Diaspora by Andrew Andersen

(Source: <https://andrewandersenwriter.wordpress.com/2017/03/22/caucasus-russian-atrocities-in-the-north-18th-20th-centuries/>

<http://circassianidentity.blogspot.com/p/circassians-today.html>)

 Turkey	Betw. 138, 652 and 2,000,000	Between 372,247 and 2,233,595
 Syria	Ca 100,000	
 Jordan	65,000	
 Libya	35,000	
 Iraq	30,000	
 Israel	3,595	
 Germany	40,000	50,073
 United States of America	9,000	
 Bulgaria	573	
 Netherlands	500	



### 10.3 (Table. 03) Different Names of Circassia

Languages	Circassian	English	Russian	Georgian	Arabic	Turkish	Persian	Greek
Circassia	Xekwzch (Old Country)	Circassia	Cherkesia	Cherkezeti	Shirkasia	Cherkesia	Cherkesestan	Zyghoy

### 10.4 (Table. 04) Different Names of Circassian

Languages	Circassian	Ossetians	Russian	Georgian	Arabic	Turkish	Persian	Greek
Circassian	Adyghe (people of highland)	Kasag	Kasogi or Kasogi	Kashaqi	Kerkets or Kashak	Cherkess	Kerkets or Kashak	Kerxetai

### 10.5 (Table. 05) Circassian Tribes in the Flag of Circassia



### 10.6 (Table. 06) The class pyramid of Circassian Hierarchical by Amjad Jaimoukha

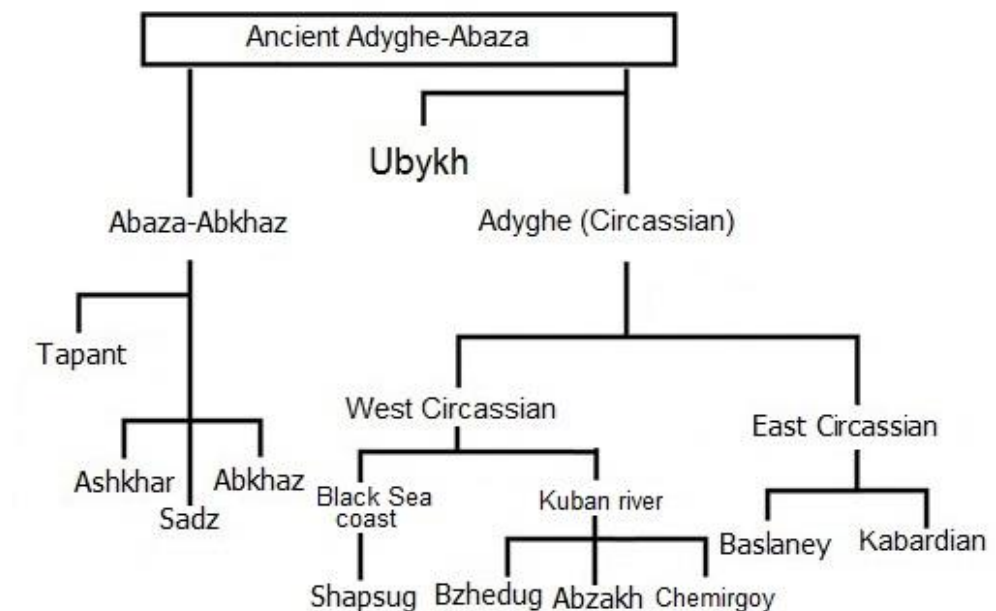
(Source: Jaimoukha, 2001, p. 157)

	(Pschi) 'Prince'	
(Mirze) 'Offspring of equally ranked parents'		(Tume) 'Children of unequally ranked parents'
	(Werq)	

	‘Nobility, Courtiers, Vassals’	
(L’aqwel’esh) ‘Most Noble=duke’	(Gwdes) (literally: ‘Carriage-Riders’) ‘Nobility of foreign origin’	(Dizchiniqwe) ‘Less Noble=earl’
	(Lhxwqwel’) ‘Freemen and peasants’	
(Wine’wt), (Winezeihe) ‘Menial; Housemaid’	(L’aqwel’); (L’aqwenpit); (Winepit); (L’isch’e) ‘Bond peasants, Serfs’	(Psch’ant’edet) ‘Hand’; (Pschil’) ‘Slave’

### 10.7 (Table. 07) Northwest Caucasian language family by Adamsa123

(Source: <https://howlingpixel.com/wiki/Circassians>)



## 10.8 (Table. 08) Ethno-Political Situation in North Caucasus

(Source: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf\\_proceedings/CF139.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF139.html))<sup>366</sup>

### How Has the Republic's Declaration of Sovereignty Affected the Political Interests of Ethnic Groups?

	Region: Population (in percents)						
	Adygei	Daghestan	Ingushetia	Kabardino-Balkaria	Karachai-Cherkess	North Ossetia-Alania	Rostov Region
Improved	36.23	40.17	47.24	40.30	38.13	34.97	15.64
Deteriorated	12.32	28.61	24.41	21.39	28.13	25.17	36.02
No Change	45.65	30.35	22.05	30.35	32.50	30.77	22.27
Undecided	5.80	0.87	6.30	7.96	1.25	9.09	26.07
Total:	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

### Do You Support the Creation of Ethnic States?

	Region: Administrative/Political Elite (in percents)					
	Summary	Adygei	Daghestan	Ingushetia	Kabardino-Balkaria	Rostov Region, Krasnodar Territory
Yes	6.01	0.00	3.85	11.36	2.86	16.67
No	73.77	74.19	82.69	59.09	82.86	72.22
Undecided	20.22	25.81	13.46	29.54	14.29	11.12
Total:	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

### To What Extent Do Regional Authorities Take Into Consideration the Interests of Ethnic Groups?

	Region: Administrative/Political Elite (in percents)					
	Summary	Adygei	Daghestan	Ingushetia	Kabardino-Balkaria	Rostov Region, Krasnodar Territory
To a large extent	21.31	29.03	28.85	18.18	17.14	5.55
Not significantly	37.16	41.94	21.15	56.82	37.14	33.33
Not at all	10.38	3.23	7.69	13.64	22.86	0.00
Undecided	15.30	16.13	15.38	11.36	8.57	33.33

366. Here and further are summations of the results of sociological surveys which were conducted, under the direction of *Larisa L. Khoperskaya*, by the personnel of the Laboratory of Regional Management of the Northern Caucasus Academy of State Service in 1995–96.

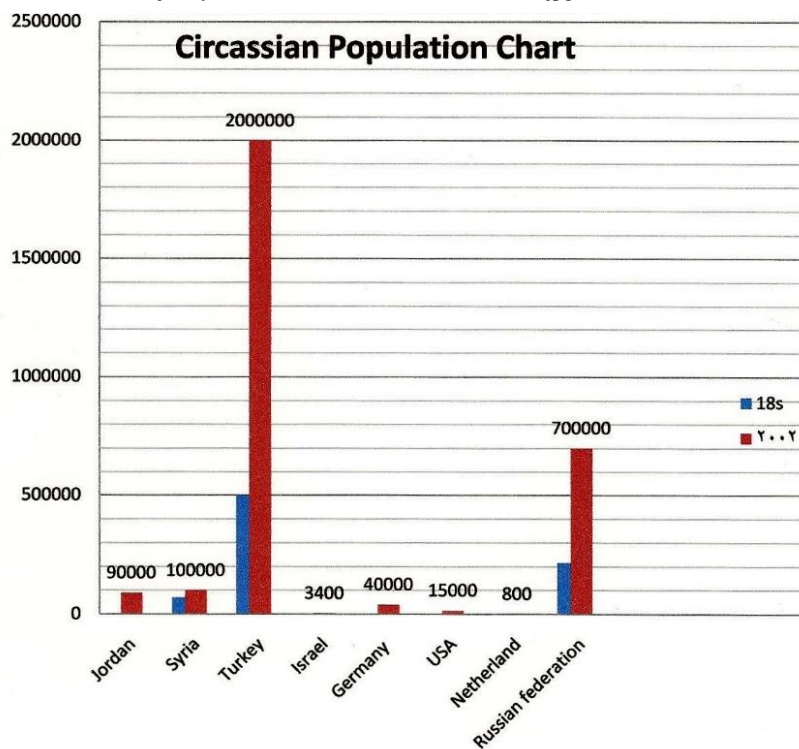


### 10.9 (Table. 09) Consequences of Russian Conquest – Ethnic population after and before

Tribes	Before	After	Percent Remaining	Percent died or deported
Kabardins	500,000	35,000	7.000%	93.000%
Shapsugs	300,000	1,983	0.661%	99.339%
Abzakhs	260,000	14,660	5.648%	94.362%
Natukhais	240,000	175	0.073%	99.927%
Temirgoys	80,000	3,140	3.925%	96.075%
Bzhedugs	60,000	15,263	25.438%	74.561%
Mamkhegs	8,000	1,204	15.050%	84.950%
Ademeys	3,000	230	7.667%	92.333%
Ubykhs	74,000	0	0.000%	100.000%
Zhaneys and Hatuqways	100,000	0	0.000%	100.000%

### 10.10 (Table. 10) Circassian Population Chart

(Source: [http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_RtrHEEJdNf0/TU1f7uudiQI/AAAAAAAAABY/Qt-jobRyruc/s1600/chart2+001+%25282%2529.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_RtrHEEJdNf0/TU1f7uudiQI/AAAAAAAAABY/Qt-jobRyruc/s1600/chart2+001+%25282%2529.jpg))



## 10.11 (Table. 11) Conceptual Chart of Circassian nationalism movements

	Nationalists	Sovereignists	Centrists	Culturalists	Accommodationists
Reason for start	Protesting against 2014 Olympics in Sochi	Protesting against amalgamation of Adygea into Russian region and giving away Kabardian territories to neighbor nation	To establish a common ground for the unification of the movement	Protesting against giving away Kabardian territories to neighbor nation	Protesting against giving away Kabardian territories to neighbor nation and supporting Kremlin's policy of inclusion of Adygea into different federal district
Administrative support	Jamestown Foundation (G. Howard)	President of Adygea in 2005–06 (Kh. Sovment), local businessmen in 2008 (S. Derev) and 2009 (V. Kardanov)	C. Özdemir, MP European Parliament	Presidents of KBR (A. Kanokov) and Adygea (A. Tkhakushinov)	Kremlin
Leading organizations	CCI NJ (Y. Yaguar and Z. Barsik)	CC in Maikop in 2005–07 (M. Berzegov), Khase Nalchik since 2009 (I. Yaganov)	Federation of European Circassians (A. Dasdemir), Circassians (S. Zhemukhov, A. Bekshokov)	Gihan Gantemir (Turkey), Kanschobi Ajakhov (Russia)	Presidents of KBR (A. Kanokov) and Adygea (A. Tkhakushinov)

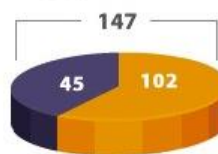
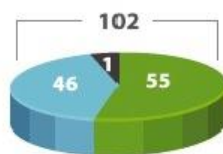
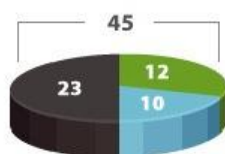
## 10.12 (Table. 12) Statistics of Victims

### STATISTICS OF VICTIMS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS IN MAY 2013 ACCORDING TO CAUCASIAN KNOT'S DATA



**147 PEOPLE**  
BECAME THE VICTIMS  
OF ARMED CONFLICT

#### INDEPENDENT STATISTICS OF VICTIMS FOR MAY



#### KILLED

■ CIVILIAN  
■ GOVERNMENT  
■ INSURGENT

#### WOUNDED

■ CIVILIAN  
■ GOVERNMENT  
■ INSURGENT

#### OF ALL VICTIMS

■ KILLED  
■ WOUNDED

### 10.13 (Table. 13) Circassian Population Died during Exile

(Source: <https://i.imgur.com/mDT0P6n.png>)

Tribes	Before	After	Percent Remaining	Percent died or deported
Kabardins	500,000	35,000	7.000%	93.000%
Shapsugs	300,000	1,983	0.661%	99.339%
Abzakhs	260,000	14,660	5.648%	94.362%
Natukhais	240,000	175	0.073%	99.927%
Temirgoys	80,000	3,140	3.925%	96.075%
Bzhedugs	60,000	15,263	25.438%	74.561%
Mamkhegs	8,000	1,204	15.050%	84.950%
Ademeys	3,000	230	7.667%	92.333%
Ubykhs	74,000	0	0.000%	100.000%
Zhaneys and Hatuqways	100,000	0	0.000%	100.000%



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