



## **ABSTRACTS**

### **Circassians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Identity and Survival – in the homeland and diaspora**

Russia and the Caucasus Regional Research (RUCARR)  
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## *Abstract*

### **Circassians Refugees of Syria, solidarity cases of Diaspora in Turkey**

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There are several breaking points that have direct effects to Circassian Identity such as wars, political developments etc. The Syria Crisis is yet to a major breaking point that affect and will have effects to the Circassian Identity in Diaspora.

In this paper, I aim to give an insider perspective for future studies over Circassians presenting how the social structures of the Circassian Diaspora, mainly in Turkey, have faced and acted for Syrian Circassians as the War in Syria had started.

I begun with an overall information about the Circassians of Syria based on reports by also including my personal experiences and observations during my travel to Damascus in 2008.

I then continue the reactions of Circassians of Turkey that got alarmed as the war started to spread. And, I list the problems they have faced during the seek of the ways of help. Here, by mentioning the incidents on a timeline, would discuss the helping methods of Turkey's Circassians over the solidarity cases, including the incident of Circassians of Turkey saving Circassians of Damascus area by renting three commercial airplanes.

I summarize by mentioning the dilemmas and reactions they have faced.

# **Survival and Transformation of Circassian Identity in the Eastern Marmara Region in Turkey through Gastronationalism and Ethno-Tourism**

**By Zeynel Abidin Besleney**

In addition to the more visible development of formation of lively and mutually-impacting cultural and political ties with the homeland and other Circassian diaspora communities worldwide, the Post-Soviet era has also witnessed adoption of new strategies by members of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey - both activists or laymen- for economic, cultural, linguistic and political survival (communally and, increasingly, individually) through adapting to and benefitting from the needs and expectations of Turkey's new socio-economic and political realities.

While this phenomenon is in evidence in almost all localities in Turkey where a sizable Circassian community resides, in this presentation I would like to focus on the Circassian settlements and communities around the Lake Sapanca in the Eastern Marmara region, which, I believe, constitute in many ways a microcosm of the wider Circassian diaspora in Turkey.

Lake Sapanca region is located in and between the towns of Sakarya and Kocaeli. These towns, to which one can also add the smaller adjacent town of Duzce, are home not only thousands of Circassians but also to Abkhazians, Georgians, Laz, Bosnians, Albanians, and Pomaks, as well as to members of Turkish immigrant communities from the Balkans and the eastern Black Sea region that together make this area one of the most ethnically diverse regions of Turkey.

Furthermore, together with Istanbul, which is an hour's drive away, Kocaeli is one of the leading industrial and economic centres of Turkey and like Istanbul is home to an ever-growing well-educated white-collar middle class that is more open to expression of minority cultures and identities through gastronomy, architecture, language, and various forms of cultural performances including ethnic dances.

Against this background, I would like to investigate the phenomenon of springing up of Circassian, and Circassian-owned, restaurants, cafes, theme parks, eco-friendly villages, horse-riding centres, walking clubs and organisation of food and dance festivals in the region and their impact on local, and general, Circassian identity as well as Circassians' perception by the local, and wider, Turkish society. Creation of political and economical networks with the local bureaucratic elites for the benefit of Circassian political and cultural concerns will also be looked.

While highlighting the particularities of the case of Circassians in this locality, this study makes a case for further studies into similarities with and/or differences from other instances of gastronationalism and ethno-tourism around the world, including the Caucasus.

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## **THE PRESERVATION OF CIRCASSIAN LANGUAGE AND CIRCASSIAN CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION**

Contemporary reality provides many tools and information volumes, high speed movement of objects (animate or not), but because recognition is referred to as globalization. Through technical means, the moods and thoughts of some of the carriers come into the possession of other (on both personal and global levels).

Always existed in close combination with the traditional mentality of the Adyghe etiquette, forming culture (not only behavior, but also thoughts), rod, his weapon was the word. Considering a verbal statement is quite powerful and potentially capable of Adygeya had to think and carefully spoken. It had conditions, but first and foremost, is to look back at him. In said Adyg could adapt to the environment, but most importantly, on mental code of the nation, ought to show reverence. And because in the process basic interpersonal communication Circassians often the drawing up of the impressions of the interlocutor only one syllable spoken to them (sometimes just the greeting). Wrong pronunciation, phonetic disorders can be perceived as an insult, can affect the development of communication act – relationships. Therefore, language and speech mechanism is one of the determinants on the interpersonal field.

For centuries existed the North Caucasus (including Adyg) culture presented by many ethnic professional components. While a number of them managed to overcome the obstacles of severe centuries. This was possible in the field of coherence and balance of national thinking, with the ability of sage to cover the subject and make the required findings. Any medium Circassian language has access to every chronicle of the interval from which it accounted for the ethnic

track of thinking and behavior. However, such a large current circumstances, consistently continues to be the actual risk taking in the linguistic and cultural heritage of small ethnic groups major ethnic groups. A noticeable situation where reckless is able to leave the civilization, go a rare of the nation, and to be forgotten remarkable language mechanisms. And this is possible at home and in other places of residence of the Circassians. Moreover, in the second case the situation aggravated. Some of the main factors in the loss of the younger generation of the propensity to mastery of the mother tongue (here, Adyghe) say scientists believe significantly inefficient use of ethnic group to the available global opportunities. Consequently, the national Union, to which, necessarily, today, act as planetary scale, the ethnic group must preserve its own language and speech formation, similar to those of their ancestors and ensures that it is to our descendants.

## The current situation of the Circassian community in Iraq: the struggle for survival and formal recognition

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The Circassian community in Iraq has been facing several problems during the last decades because of the political and socio-economic changes in the country. The fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime due to the United States’ military campaign, the conflict between the international military forces led by the USA and the local Islamist militants, and finally the rise of Daesh have threatened the fragile Iraqi *status quo* and affected the recent living conditions of the Circassian community.

The number of Circassians or North Caucasians in Iraq is between 30 to 50 thousand people whose largest communities are in Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Fallujah. In 2016 the Circassians together with the Chechens and the Dagestani unified their communities and created the organisation *Jami'at al-Tadaamun al-Khyriya lil-Shishan wa Daghestan wa Shirkas al-Iraq* (Solidarity Association of Chechnya and Dagestan and Circassians of Iraq, hereinafter "Caucasus") with the aim of seeking formal recognition in the Iraqi constitution to guarantee equal rights and legal protection from violence against minorities.

This paper will attempt to examine the current situation of the Circassian community in Iraq focusing the attention on the effect which the recent Iraqi conflict and the war against Daesh have had on the Circassian community. Furthermore, this research describes the Circassian social and political activities to defend the community's identity, the historical and linguistic background, and traditions as result of the study of the structure and the work of the Circassian community and the "Caucasus" organisation.

***Keywords:*** *Circassians, Iraq, North Caucasus, ethnic minority, Circassian diaspora.*

# **Identity challenges of a diaspora minority: lessons from the case studies of Circassians in Israel and in the U.S.A**

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This paper will analyze the challenges of identity maintenance in two Circassian communities: in Israel and in New Jersey, USA.

Both communities consist of a few thousand people in specific areas and are located in societies with non-Muslim majorities. Both communities are facing challenges in changing from an “enclave culture” to a globalized world and in integrating with wider society, creating greater tensions between individual development and free choice on the one hand, and loyalty to the Circassian community on the other hand. In both countries, however, there is a growing radical and anti-Muslim political climate which raises questions about the relations between civic, religious and ethno-cultural (or diaspora-national) components of identity. This also raises questions regarding the relations with other neighboring Muslims.

The study will analyze the challenges that these communities face (e.g. marriage, language maintenance and education) and will focus on different initiatives to cope with these challenges. Special attention will be given to the place of the Circassian Genocide as an important “engine” in addressing issues of identity and peoplehood. Activists in both communities were highly involved in the ‘no Sochi’ campaign. However, this was followed by a natural regress since 2015, when Sochi was no longer in focus.

In Israel, the municipal structure enabled continuity and even growth of activities connected to the Circassian Genocide. At the same time, there are also new attempts to cooperate with Caucasus-based organizations that adjust to Russian control. The ability to take these directions at the same time poses interesting questions.

An interesting development ‘from below’ is a growing awareness of the Circassian Genocide in high schools attended by Circassians, where the majority of teachers and students are Israeli Jews. These developments are important since they offer the possibility of going beyond the existing contradictions of identity performance.

A different structure and environment in New Jersey made the coping with current challenges much harder. There are interesting initiatives that involve cooperation with academic institutes, but the community is still looking for ways to address the education of youth. At the same time, the arrival of refugees from Syria in recent years suggests new challenges and opportunities.

The study is based on long-term field work among Circassians in Israel, and on various field journeys and interviews among the New Jersey community.

## **An Analysis of the Effects Participating in Diaspora Tourism of Circassians Living in Turkey on Their Place Attachment**

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This study is carrying out as a doctoral dissertation in Social Sciences Institutes, Department of Tourism Management, under the title of “Determining the Effects on Place Attachment of Circassians Living in Turkey by Involvement to Diaspora Tourism”. Besides researches about the involvement of people who live in diaspora to the diaspora tourism are few it was compelled to make studies in this field. When studies about migration and tourism were examined, motivation of the individuals and groups participating in diaspora tourism which offers a basic foundation and the complex structure of diaspora tourism demonstrated us that it would be inadequate if it was examined only within the boundaries of tourism literature.

As because family immigration histories of the individuals' live in diaspora, place attachments and distinct cultural identities of these people entail an interdisciplinary endeavor in terms of understanding effects and outcomes of the diaspora tourism participation. That was why effects on place attachment participating in diaspora tourism of Circassian individuals living in Turkey towards homeland, which their ancestors had been come from, was tried to be revealed in this study by carrying out it with including topics mentioned above and examining deeply their cultural identities.

In this study we applied semi-structured interviews by sticking to the snowball method. In these interviews, the migration histories of the families which individuals belong to, individual identities, place attachments, homeland visits and effects of these visits were tried to be determined. In this way, with the information obtained under the qualitative research, both the Circassian individuals' participation of Circassians living in Turkey in diaspora tourism among where their ancestors had been come from, and effects of their participation in diaspora tourism on their cultural identities and place attachment were examined.

Previous literature portrays diaspora tourists as homogeneous and suggests that home return travel engenders broadly similar impacts on the individual. This study revealed diasporic communities were quite diverse and complex. Five types of Circassian diaspora tourist were identified from those each having distinct travel motives, experiences and feelings, migration backgrounds, cultural identities and place

attachments. The consequences of diaspora tourism particularly in terms of place attachment and cultural identity were further discussed, as home return travel induces positive, neutral and negative reactions.

**Merab Chukhua**

**Study of Circassian and other Iberian-Caucasian languages in Georgia as a part of the cultural policy of the region**

The Circassian Cultural Center is still going to continue its fruitful scientific activity in the comprehensive study of Circassian languages and culture, which is determined by the Center's goal that is naturally in full compliance with the global concept of development of Georgia as European-Caucasian country. But at the same time I believe that the country's regional policy towards the direction of the North Caucasus requires more activity, because I consider that under the conditions of the route undertaken by Georgia, the successful development of the country in all directions required for the state and especially for the North Caucasus will make the country the world's first state which, along with other circumstances, will weaken Russian imperial positions in the Caucasus region.

## **Informal Circassian Organisations in Turkey after 2000: The Case of Caucasus Forum**

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This paper uses notions of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991) and *repertoire of contention* (Tilly, 2006) to study Caucasus Forum (Kafkasya Forumu) which is one of the organizations of diasporic Circassians in Turkey. Caucasus Forum organising the No Sochi campaign and various protest showed the strongest opposition to Sochi Olympics. The study is based on content analysis of the Caucasus Forum's website and interviews with three key activists of the Forum. The paper first focuses on how the activists of Caucasus Forum built their subjectivities from an intersectional point of view. Especially, gerontocratic pattern of the Circassian society has given rise to prioritizing the notion of “being young” by the Forum activists. Apart from these, activists of the Caucasus Forum have actively attended the Armenian Genocide remembrance events, Hrant Dink remembrance organisations, Gezi protests and [Kurdish] resolution dialogues. In this context, the Caucasus Forum have emphasized an intersectional activism that is different from other Circassian organizations which motivated an enlargement in the spaces of intersection of the Circassian identity with other identities. Second, focus of this paper is the organisational structuring of the Caucasus Forum and how this has influenced the transnationalisation and increased the effect of the protests they organised. Caucasus Forum is a local organization with members living mainly in Turkey and they connect to interested parties in other countries through the Internet. Thanks to this organization style, protests they organise are widespread and effective. In conclusion, the way other Circassian organizations in Turkey are influenced from the intersectional activism of the Caucasus Forum and its repertoire of contentions deriving from an experience of anarchist/leftist politics is going to be discussed.

Keywords: intersectionality; activism; Turkey; Circassian; repertoire of contention

## **The Role of Minorities in Regime Security Strategy: A Case Study of the Circassians in King Hussein's Jordan**

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A prominent feature of Middle Eastern-focused regime security strategies is the exploitation and utilisation of minority groups. While in homogenous societies this strategy can stress social ties, in heterogeneous societies the division between the minority group, society, and the regime, can represent substantial strategic benefits. Prominent contemporary examples of this strategy include the Assad regime's long-standing relationship with the Alawite, Assyrian, Druze, and Circassian communities, and Sunni rule in Iraq under Saddam Hussein however, the role of the Circassian within Jordan represents a unique case study which the proposed presentation seeks to explore.

Circassian Jordanians are distinctive because of their alien pedigree and juxtaposing societal virtues to the local Jordanian population. King Hussein's reign faced dynamically evolving threats and thus required trusted groups and personnel to shore his rocky tenure. Because the Circassian community specialises in security matters, and that the Jordanian armed forces are a fundamental pillar to the Hashemite monarchy, the role of the Circassians within King Hussein's Jordan underscores yet another example of the successful exploitation of minority communities.

This paper therefore examines the theoretical framing of regime security and applies a lens of minority utilisation to illustrate how King Hussein reinforced his rule through their strategic deployment.

## **The mIRC Circassians: The Circassian Diaspora Online at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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When Circassians started gaining access to the Internet in Turkey it became very important for them to use it as a way to connect with people who belonged to their ethnic group, shared a similar culture and traditions. While the last decade saw increased political mobilisation of the Circassian youth around Olympics and 150<sup>th</sup> year of the Exile, earlier years focused more on the cultural existence and networking. The connections established online on many Caucasian channels in mIRC were transformed into face-to-face acquaintance and later into friendship or, occasionally, marriage between virtual *kashens*\*. They organised meetings in various cities of Turkey where members came from different places bringing along other Circassians that were not part of the online channels, further developing the ethnic network. When mIRC started losing its impact among Circassians because “others” could also enter the channels and there would be swearing, alternative ways of communication was established. The marje.yahoogroup was formed in this period which worked as a site of information exchange and discussion till 2011 when suddenly it stopped. In the same period various Circassian forum websites were established but they all fell into silence with increased use of Facebook.

The data for this paper was collected through online interviews in 2017, when two Facebook groups were formed to reestablish networks of mIRC channels. The member profile of mIRC varied between urban settlers to Circassians living in rural areas, and the members of the mIRC Facebook groups reflects a higher rate of female users considering the relatively lower computer literacy of women at the time in Turkey. Though their access places to the Internet varied between workplace, internet cafe and home-internet, nearly all of the people I interviewed described their access as “spending a lot of time on mIRC Caucasian channels”. Some who spoke Circassian and/or English also stated that they were part of many international channels where people from the homeland and Diaspora elsewhere (eg. Jordan, Israel) were also members. In those years, political polarisation in the diaspora was still very strong and feared to divide the diaspora unification. For that reason politics was “not allowed” in the channels but some “political mobilisation” took place among members that shared similar world view in relation to Circassian problems. Using narratives of people that were part of those earlier internet networks this paper is going to focus on the role of Internet in Circassian identity formation and survival of culture and traditions in the diaspora.

\**Kashen* is the socially accepted form of courting in the Circassian culture, not necessarily leading to marriage.

## **Circassian musical traditions and identity in the context of globalisation. Experience from fieldwork and recordings** (preliminary title)

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The presentation focuses on the use of modern and multiplatform tools, methodologies for researching traditional culture, and the links between academic ways of documenting and collecting data and independence “Do-It-Yourself” strategies of working with culture. While on the surface level these approaches seem to oppose one another, it will be will illustrated how folklore traditions (self-recording ritual performers in villages) and western commercial initiatives (Gramofone Records, Pathe, Smithson Folkways Records, Alan Lomax. Sublime Frequencies label etc), not only share ideologies but can/must work together. The connection between art and traditional cultures studies is not artificial, but natural, so the processes of scientific research and the creation of content for a wider audience can be conducted simultaneously. Modern art concepts and technical equipment can document culture and traditions in their natural environment and conditions – through sound art and field recording aesthetics and guerilla filmmaking. But this process is not just for documentation but also a process of promoting traditions for local and international audience through multiplatform projects, using sound, images, objects and texts. The main concern of the presentation is to show how the Modern Globalization and the creation of products from traditional practices is not necessarily a threat to ethnic identity, but a diverse way of keeping culture alive. Examples will be given as to how ideas of de-centralization can be maintained in research and art can stay free from colonial heritage and self-orientalist inferiority complexes. All these ideas will be illustrated through Ored Recording’s activities and other work conducted by similar projects.

Sample recordings:

<http://oredrecordings.bandcamp.com/>

<https://www.lecourrierderussie.com/culture/musique/lcdr-radio/2015/06/caucase-fm-ored-recordings-peuples-autochtones/>

<http://inrussia.com/understanding-circassian-folklore>

<http://www.farfrommoscow.com/articles/ored-recordings.html>

<https://vimeo.com/71703503>

# **THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHECHEN-KISTS IN PANKISI GORGE ON THE RECOGNITION OF “CIRCASSIAN GENOCIDE” BY GEORGIAN PARLIAMENT IN 2011**

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## **Abstract**

The recognition of Circassian Genocide by Georgian Parliament in 2011 affected Circassians and the other North-Caucasian peoples in the world with important degree and created a large-scale dispute among Circassian diaspora in Turkey. While some of them supported this recognition some of them such as KAFFED (the Federation of Caucasian Associations) and ABHAZFED (the Federation of Abkhazian Associations) criticized it harshly, referring to the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

As for the situations in Georgia over this recognition, especially Chechen-Kists in Pankisi Gorge was interested in this recognition because there are similar questions between Vainakh people (Chechens, Kists and Ingushs) and Russia over exile, massacre and war. In this way, this recognition has brought important element for the construction of Chechen-Kist identity. In spite of this situation, the influence of the recognition of Circassian Genocide by Georgian Parliament on minority groups in Georgia was not researched very much by today. This work will discuss the perspective of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi Gorge on this decision. This work is generally based on semi-structured interviews conducted with Chechen-Kist intellectuals in Pankisi Gorge and Tbilisi and analysis of these interviews due to the scarcity of resources on this issue.

At the first chapter, we will give the short information about the attitude of Chechen-Kist toward their history. At the second chapter, we will explain Chechen-Kists' attitude toward the recognition of Circassian Genocide by Georgian Parliament and its reasons. At the third chapter, we will discuss the influence of this decision on the identity-building strategy of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi Gorge. In conclusion we will summarize these three chapters and emphasize that Chechen-Kists in Pankisi Gorge make efforts to construct their identity on the basis of painful memory against assimilation and that this decision encouraged them to carry forward their identity-building strategy.

## **Circassian society in the 21st century: realities and prospects**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, we show the importance of the correct understanding of the current situation of the Circassians based on demographic indicators as the fertility rate, the level of language distribution and migration in the context of demographic manipulation of minority peoples in the North Caucasus region since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The author reviews the modern trends and possible prospects of the ethno-demographical evolution of the Circassian society.

The North Caucasian republics of the post-Soviet period are characterized by the common ethno-demographical trend in de-Russification and increase in the share of titular peoples [1]. At the same time, the Russian language is being involved more in the life of titular peoples with a decrease in the proportion of those who speak the titular languages. However, the republics differ significantly in the pace of these processes. The maximum monoethnic states are in the Northeast Caucasus with less than 5% of native Russians; on the other hand, republics in the Northwest Caucasus like Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Adygheya with the titular Circassian people still retain a significant percentage of Russians as well as show faster increase of Russian-speaking population number among the titular peoples than in the Northeast Caucasus. And the situation is aggravated by the fact of decreases of users of the mother tongue in the everyday life.

In the Soviet Union, the Circassian nation was artificially divided into Adygeys, Kabardinians, Circassians, and Shapsugs via formation of different autonomous regions for Circassians dispersed in the whole Northwest Caucasus and became an ethnic minority as the result of the conquest of the Caucasus by Russian Empire of the 19th century [2]. Moreover, a Shapsugh autonomous area had been established on the 6 September 1924 but was eliminated on 24 May 1945, which led to a decrease in the rate of population growth in comparison with those Circassians who lived in their own autonomies.

In addition, the population censuses conducted in 2002-2010 showed overestimated numbers of Circassians, especially of Kabardians, which reassured most of the Circassian associations and lulled their vigilance. The statement of large-scale subscriptions during census 2002 was performed in [3], where the real population of Kabardians is considered to be 425-435 thousand instead of 499 thousand declared by the Russian government. Such manipulations with data lull the vigilance of most of the national associations and lead to the fact that the ethnic minorities and indigenous people of the North Caucasus such as Circassians do not realize the scale of disastrous assimilation occurring with them.

*Key words:* North Caucasus, Circassians, ethnic minorities, demography, assimilation

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[3] С.Я. Суций, Демография и расселение народов Северного Кавказа: реалии и перспективы (модернизационно-трансформационные процессы), Ростов-на-Дону: Изд-во ЮНЦ РАН, 2009. – 218 с. [S.Y. Suschiy, Demography and settling of peoples of the North Caucasus: realities and prospects (modernization and transformation processes), Rostov-on-Don: Publishing house of the SSC RAS, 2009. – 218 p.]

## “What Do the Tbilisi Archives Really Tell Us”

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The opening of the Tbilisi archives in 2008 raised the possibility of the discovery of the “smoking gun” necessary to label the events surrounding the Russo-Circassian War as genocide. Upon examination of many documents, a much more convoluted and enigmatic picture arises concerning the final expulsion of the Circassians in 1863-1864, which by itself creates more questions than answers. As it turns out, the archival material is valuable first of all as a rebuttal to the official Russian narrative, which is derived from documents in *Akty, Sobrannye Kavkazskoiu Arkheograficheskoiu Kommissieiu (AKAK)*, particularly Volume 12, which contains official correspondence between St. Petersburg and the Caucasus High Command during the planning stages of the final campaign against the Circassians and their expulsion. The archival documents, especially correspondence between the Caucasus commanders themselves, demonstrate that the opinions expressed in the letters in *AKAK* were misleading and often completely false. However, in and of themselves the archival documents do not definitively point to a deliberate act of genocide; in order to complete this picture, other little-known documents, particularly the memoirs of Caucasus Reserve Commander Milenty Olshevsky and cartographer Mikhail Veniukov, must supplement the information found in the archival documents. By using all these documents in concert, I was able in my book *The Circassian Genocide* to present what I feel is a strong case for labeling the events of 1864 in Circassia a genocide according to the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

Additionally, the documents in the Tbilisi archives raise many new questions awaiting scholarly examination: the precise number of refugees driven to the Black Sea coast, the composition of the fleet of ships who took refugees to Anatolia, the identity of military units involved in the final stages of the campaign, and the relationship of the Cossack colonists with the few Circassians who remained are all alluded to in various documents I’ve personally seen. Hopefully, there are other documents still in the archive that shed further light on these and other questions about this critical point in both Caucasian and Russian history.

## **"The hybrid Circassian: Challenges of Identity in Open Societies"**

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Maintaining ethnic boundaries and cultural identity is a central concern of Circassian communities, especially in the diaspora. Inter-marriage seems to be one of the strongest threats to the ability to maintain the continuity of the Circassian people. Since this subject is treated as taboo, less attention has been given to the experiences of the descendants of such marriages, especially their identity, potential, and connections to the Circassian people.

In this paper, we will address these questions by exploring the experience of the ‘hybrid Circassian’ and highlight the relevance of this discussion to the challenges facing Circassians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our study is based on an auto-ethnography of a ‘hybrid Circassian’ combined with ethnographic observations of an anthropologist who has studied Circassian societies for several decades. The auto-ethnography project provides a first-hand account of questions of identification and the construction of a hybrid identity. It relates to the experience of one of the authors, Yasmine Shawwaf, a graduate student with a Jordanian-Circassian father who experienced secondary migration from the Middle East to America, where he re-married Yasmine’s non-Circassian mother. Yasmine’s father lived among the Circassian community in New Jersey, but later moved to California. Yasmine, hence, grew up remote from the Circassian community, and constructed her identity where the category of ‘Circassian’ has no meaning, and ‘Caucasian’ refers to the majority of white-identifying Americans.

This auto-ethnography focuses on the construction of a hybrid identity, given the distance from the mother-tongue, homeland, and awareness of Circassian history. It also illustrates how some attachment to Circassian identity is kept on an implicit level. The auto-ethnographic project itself allows the exposure of this ‘inside’ identity– while also questioning the meanings and practices of hybridity. Central themes manifested in the auto-ethnography correspond with the ethnographic materials collected by anthropologist, Chen Bram, especially among the Circassian community in New Jersey. The findings of this paper elucidate the challenges faced by young Circassians who are distant from their community and how they negotiate their identity when their belonging, visibility, and categorization are called into question within and outside of the larger “Circassian Community”.

The lessons from this study go beyond the experiences of ‘hybrid Circassians’– it allows us to examine, from the margins, dilemmas and challenges faced by new generations of Circassians who are often removed from an intimate knowledge of Circassian culture, history and customs even if they were born to Circassian parents.

# **The relationship between the Circassians and the Türks in the North Caucasus.**

**Avraham Shmulevich**

## **Abstract**

The region of the Northern Caucasus is extremely diverse ethnically, culturally and religiously, but cultures and languages of dozens of the ethnic groups native to the area are deeply interrelated and intertwined.

The relationships between two biggest and most influential groups of population Circassians and Turkic peoples present a special interest as defining factor of the political environment in Caucasus. Turks and Circassians live together as neighbours in the two autonomous republics both of which are lead by the corrupt, pro-Kremlin elites. The dynamic of their relations will define the political future of the Caucasus, as well as the prospects of its remaining to be a part of the Russian Federation.

This article examines the relationship of the Circassians with the Turkic peoples of the North Caucasus as well as relations between Circassians and other ethnic groups such as Karachai-Balkars, Nogais, Kumyks and others in context of the political processes in the area. After mentioning the impact of wars and other most important historic factors on the way ethnic groups see each other today, we present the scholarly discourse on the role of various ethnic groups in the past and the present of Caucasus. We also discuss the attempts of uniting the Circassian and Turkic organizations, the Armenian factor in context of the relations between the Circassians and the Turks and prospects of the further developments.

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## **Circassian civil society and Russian authorities**

Islam Tekushev

A number of factors – ranging from the Sochi Olympic Games, recognition of the Cherkessian ‘genocide’ by the Georgian parliament, the Syrian conflict, decreased presence and influence of radical Islamic groups in the North Caucasus to social networks that connected thousands of Cherkessian communities around the world – have led to a marked rise in the Cherkessian national movement. This tendency has been particularly noticeable among the Cherkessian youth who are overall more active on social media. Naturally, these developments have been picked up by the Russian authorities, who are constantly worried about another hotbed of tension in the South of Russia. From 2012 to 2017, several dozens of the Cherkessian activists were convicted of “inciting hatred or enmity” and “public calls to extremism and separatism.” Russian security services see the threat of the Cherkessian national movement in its divided disbursement – Cherkessians are dominant ethnicities in three North Caucasus republic – Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygeya. Moreover, Cherkessians represent a multi-million diaspora in Middle Eastern countries, including Syria. The conflict in Syria demonstrated the repatriation potential of such diasporas. Human rights experts note a marked uptake in the pressure and prosecution of the Cherkessian activists in all three republics.

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Topic: Circassian language. The role of language in contemporary Circassian revival.

## **Language, the Pillar of our Survival**

By Miriam Yamak  
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### **Abstract**

One may question: what is the importance of a language that may have survived to date but is considered vulnerable according to the UNESCO research<sup>1</sup>? To answer this question, it is necessary to understand the role a language plays in general and consequently analyze its role in the contemporary Circassian revival.

The Circassian language has seen a great variance in history, from the single language spoken to the splitting into two literary languages with many dialects<sup>2</sup>. This is also in addition to the number of Circassians who primarily spoke the Circassian language, to the number of Circassians who speak it as a second language, or do not speak it altogether. Many factors have contributed to what we know as the present day Circassian language, be it historical or political. The fact remains that Circassians have been able to prevent their language from extinction against all odds. Have the Circassians prevented cultural extinction as well?

According to Wade Davis<sup>3</sup>, assimilation, acculturation and annihilation of a culture begins to occur when the language is lost. Presently, we can witness this occurrence gradually taking place amongst the Circassians living in exile, in the countries that formed the Ottoman Empire. Circassians are a loyal people in the land they live in and tend to become Jordanians, Syrians, Turks etc. of Circassian decent. In many instances the Circassian identity becomes secondary, if not tertiary for Circassians who identify with religion.

We must also be aware that there is a direct correlation between language and culture. In fact, "language isn't just a body of vocabulary or a set of grammatical rules; it's a flash of the human spirit, the vehicle through which the soul of each particular culture comes into the material world"<sup>4</sup>. It is through the Circassian language that the Circassian values, beliefs, customs and solidarity can be shared and preserved.

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<sup>1</sup> Moseley, Christopher (ed.). 2010. Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, 3rd edn. Paris, UNESCO

<sup>2</sup> Wixman, Ronald. 1980. Language Aspects of Ethnic Patterns and Processes in the North Caucasus.

<sup>3</sup> Anthropologist Wade Davis explains in his phone interview with the National Geographic. [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/06/0627\\_020628\\_wadedavis.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/06/0627_020628_wadedavis.html)

<sup>4</sup> Anthropologist Wade Davis explains in his phone interview with the National Geographic. [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/06/0627\\_020628\\_wadedavis.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/06/0627_020628_wadedavis.html)

## REVIVAL OF ADYGABZE ON FACEBOOK

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The aim of this paper/study is to analyse socio-linguistic features of adygabze that a person has carried over to facebook to share posts for the last three years, the role adygabze plays in the construction of social identity and its socio-political outputs. In this regard, 50 adygabze posts that Yakup Temel, a facebook user of хэхэс адыгэ (an adyghe who lives in the diaspora), shared via his personal account between the years 2015-2017 and the responses given to them have been chosen. The posts mentioned have been discussed in two categories. The first category comprises answers and comments in adygabze given and made by other social media users in response to his one-word and meaning-based questions. The second category consists of oral history records that Yakup Temel himself has collected from oral history narrators from Uzunyayla and put on paper. It is also comprised of memories and narratives that are cross section of 150-year Circassian life in Uzunyayla and of comments on and contributions to them by other users. It is seen that these narratives are regarded by Yakup Temel within the scope of *Uzunyayla Çerkes Edebiyatı (Uzunyayla Circassian Literature)* and that this has gained acceptance.

In this study, when Yakup Temel's posts are analysed it is seen that the responses given to his posts also show how adygabze is still alive among adyghe people using facebook. Besides, It's observed that posts and sharings are effective in the construction of identity and social belonging. What's more, it is considered that not only does it enable individuals to portray their intellectual world but also enrich it. Furthermore, a sense of longing and an act of imitation have permeated into the responses given to the posts. It can be said that through the narration of memories on facebook Adygabze gets into circulation again among individuals. It can also be said that the number of people having literacy skills in Adygabze is increasing day by day thanks to facebook. Last but not least, the fact that Adygabze on Facebook is a medium of contact, communication and interaction between хэхэс (an adyghe who lives in the diaspora) and хэжурьыс (an adyghe who lives in his/her native country) can be regarded as another output.

**Key Words:** Adygabze, Uzunyayla, social media, Yakup Temel.

## **Circassian Issue: The Legacy of the Sochi Olympics and Future Trajectories**

By Sufian N. Zhemukhov, Senior Research Associate at George Washington University, USA, zhemukho@gwu.edu

The development of the Circassian movement in recent decades proved its sustainability. The first wave enjoyed indirect support of the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin. In 1989-2005, the Circassian world became ideologically united defining the three strategic goals that remained consistent since then, including recognition of genocide, repatriation of diaspora, and unification of Circassian territories. Though the next Russian president, Vladimir Putin, temporarily suppressed the movement, there emerged the second wave, since 2005. A new network of dozens of Circassian NGOs challenged the Kremlin's new policy of ignoring and silencing the Circassian issue during the 2014 Olympics held in Sochi, once the capital of Circassia. Unable to silence the Circassian movement, Moscow could not ignore it anymore, and in the middle of the Olympics, Putin issued a statement labeling the Circassian question as a new form of containment strategy against Russia, similar to the U.S. Cold War era policies. After the Circassian question enjoyed wide International attention during the Sochi games, the expectations that it would get back to its pre-Olympic status quo proved wrong. One of the new tendencies included increased closeness between the Circassian ethnic movement, which is partly anti-Kremlin, and the Circassian Muslim movement, which is mainly loyal to the Russian authorities. Emergence of the Istanbul academic school is another development, alongside with three older ones established in Russia – the Maykop, Nalchik, and Moscow academic schools. Circassian youth have been increasing their literacy around the world, resisting Russification, Turkization, Arabization, Americanization, and Israelization. Such a trajectory, however, may clash, in the future, with the reality of Circassians remaining a divided nation, with the established sub-identities of Kabardians, Cherkess, Adygeans, Shapsugs, and Mozdok Christian Kabardians, as well as with revival of the identity of Ubykhs and development of the newer sub-identities of Circassian Americans, Circassian Jordanians, Circassian Syrians, Turkish and Israeli Circassians, and even Moscow and European Circassians.