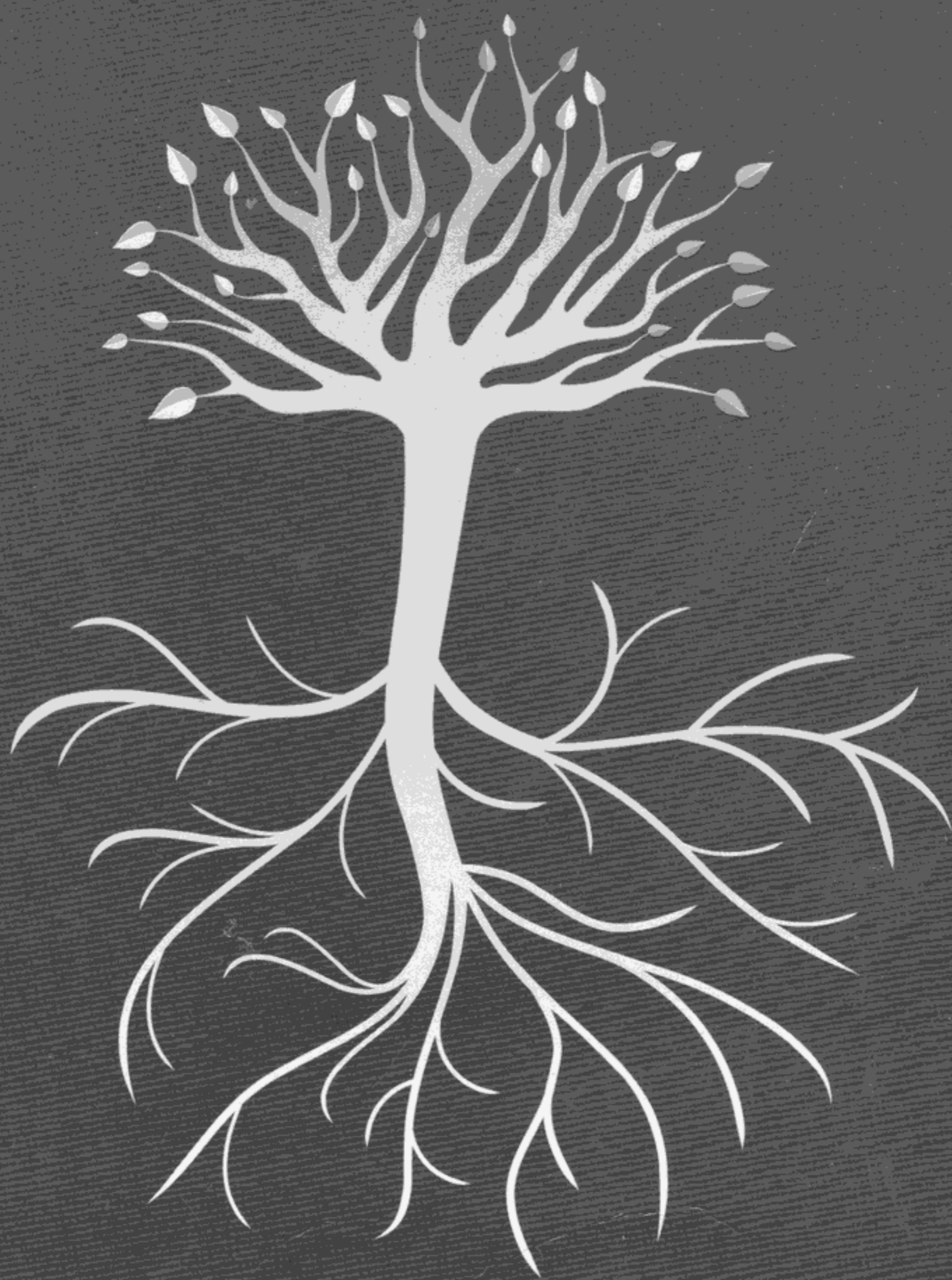


THE NORTH CAUCASUS  
HISTORIES  
DIASPORAS  
AND  
CURRENT CHALLENGES



EDITED BY  
ERGÜN ÖZGÜR



THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

***The North Caucasus: Histories, Diasporas  
and Current Challenges***

*Proceedings of the Sukhum Conference*

*"Towards a New Generation of Scholarship on the Caucasus"*

***Edited by  
Ergün Özgür***

# ***The North Caucasus: Histories, Diasporas and Current Challenges***

*Proceedings of the Sukhum Conference*

*“Towards a New Generation of Scholarship on the Caucasus”*

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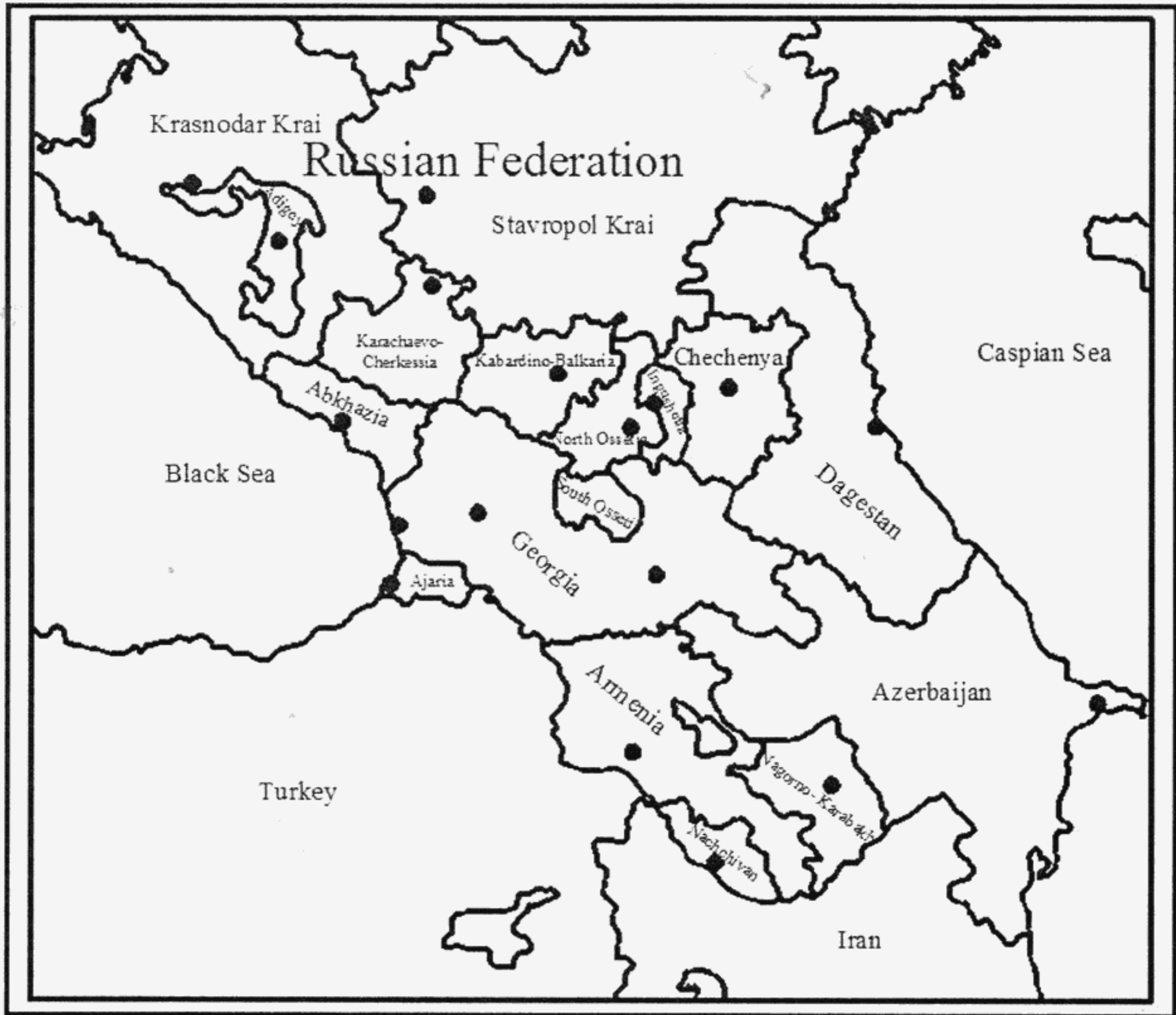


Fig 1 Map of Major Ethnic Groups in the Caucasus

## PREFACE

The papers and abstracts in this volume were originally presented at a two-day conference, entitled *Towards a New Generation of Scholarship on the Caucasus*, and held in Sukhum, Abkhazia on October 30-31, 2007. The conference was co-organized by the Social Science Research Council (New York), Circassianacademia (a scholarly listserv) and The Center for Strategic Studies (Sukhum).

The overall purpose of the conference was to explore the themes and issues that are emerging in recent scholarship, especially by younger scholars, and the ways in which they speak to contemporary challenges faced by the various small republics and states of the region. The presenters and participants comprised an international group of scholars from Abkhazia, Britain, Israel, Japan, Russia and Turkey at various points of their professional careers. A range of academic disciplines – and regional traditions within these general disciplines – was represented: sociology, demography, linguistics, anthropology, political science and history as well as specialists working with NGOs and with government research agencies. Overall, the volume is united by a common interest in the Caucasus, primarily the peoples of the North Caucasus, especially Abkhazians and Circassians.

The “North Caucasus” is used in this volume to denote a cultural unit rather than a circumscribed geographical location and denotes linguistically, historically and culturally related peoples who share(d) a highland mountain tradition and live(d) north and north-west of the diagonal swath of the Caucasus mountains. Focusing on these peoples and their diasporas fills a critical gap in the overall understanding of the region, whose southern populations (e.g., Georgians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians) have received the largest share of an admittedly limited scholarship.

Because of improved access to the North Caucasus as well as to Ottoman Turkish and Russian/Soviet archival sources, there has been a significant increase in the amount of primary information available to scholars. As these papers demonstrate, this is an exciting time for conducting and sharing research, for generating new questions and approaches, and for the development of the field of Caucasus Studies.

The volume is divided into three sections: State, Society and Citizenship; Economic Challenges: A Case Study; and Northern Caucasian Diasporas in Turkey.

**State, Society and Citizenship.** These papers focus on various aspects of the post-Soviet condition, including language policies, economic hardships, civil society formation, and inter-community relations, all of which are being reconfigured in changing regional patterns.

**Economic Challenges: A Case Study.** This section focuses primarily on the case of Abkhazia and its economic situation given its recognition as an independent country by only the Russian Federation and Nicaragua and therefore its limited ability to utilize its resources and engage in normal economic relations with other states. As the papers point out, there are lessons to be drawn from the case of Abkhazia for other small states, as well as an appreciation of intended and unintended consequences of the expansion of the European Union for its “neighborhood.”

**Northern Caucasian Diasporas in Turkey.** As the largest destination for the historical exodus of North Caucasian peoples in the late 19th century, this set of papers explores in fine detail the conditions of present-day communities in Turkey, their historical evolution and social organization, their relations with the Turkish state and with their homeland(s) in the Caucasus.

The fourth and final section, *Research Notes*, contains abstracts of papers that were given at the conference, and which follow the order of the three thematic sections, but were not developed into full essays.

We would like to thank all of the authors whose papers and abstracts appear in these proceedings. We would also like to acknowledge several presentations that were given at the conference, although not included in this volume, by Burcu Gültekin Punsman, Sevda Alankuş and Sergei Markedonov.

Finally, we would like to thank Olga Shukhova for her translations of Russian texts into English and Alice Horner for her excellent work in guiding the revision of the papers and editing them in preparation for publication.

*Seteney Shami (Social Science Research Council)*

*Ergün Özgür (Circassianacademia)*

*May 2009*



## Opening Remarks



*Social Science Research Council, New York, N.Y.*

*October 30, 2007*

*Workshop on "Towards a New Generation of Scholarship on the Caucasus" 30-31 May 2007*

*A Word of Welcome from the Social Science Research Council*

*Dear Colleagues:*

In the name of the Social Science Research Council I am delighted to welcome you. We are very pleased to sponsor this workshop and to enable important discussions and knowledge sharing that we hope will lead to the advancement of scholarship and research on the Caucasus region as well as to the creation of new networks, especially among the younger generation of scholars beginning to do their work in this important region. I regret that I cannot be in Sukhum with you today, and hope that we will be able to meet at future events. I thank Ms. Ergün Özgür for presenting this statement on behalf of the SSRC and for her tireless efforts in organizing this workshop.

I would like to take this occasion to give brief background information on the Social Science Research Council, as well as on the Eurasia program and its research interests on the Caucasus. I encourage you to visit our website at [www.ssrc.org](http://www.ssrc.org) for more information and details about our aims and programs.

Founded in 1923, the Social Science Research Council has a worldwide reputation for generating new knowledge and advancing social science research and understanding of critical social issues. Independent and non-for-profit, the SSRC works with practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers in all the social sciences, related professions, and the humanities and natural sciences. With partners around the world, we mobilize existing knowledge for new problems, link research to practice and policy, strengthen individual and institutional capacities for learning, and enhance public access to information.

Currently, the SSRC works on the following thematic areas: Global Security and Cooperation, Migration, Knowledge Institutions, and The Public Sphere. In addition to these program areas, the SSRC has regional programs on different areas of the world. These regional programs develop their own thematic foci and, in addition emphasize three strategic goals: international collaboration, capacity building/fellowships, and communications.

**International Collaboration:** This reflects our commitment to help build a social science adequate to contemporary social change by supporting participation of scientists from a wide variety of cultural, geographic, and institutional locations; by building stronger networks of international communication and collaboration; and by ensuring that global issues are viewed from different perspectives as they are materially different in different settings.

**Capacity Building and Fellowships:** This emphasis stresses that while we need social science knowledge now, we also need to strengthen the individual and institutional capacities that ensure it will be available in the future. To this end, the SSRC seeks through all its work to provide fellowships to support young

researchers, to conduct training programs, and to strengthen the institutions within which knowledge is produced and communicated. Social science knowledge, now, and the capacity for its generation in the future, forms the irreducible bases for responsible and effective action to improve the world.

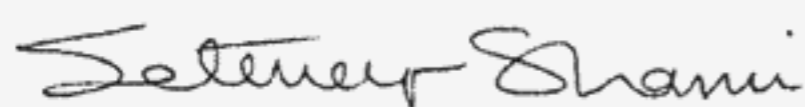
**Communications:** Dedicated to making the expertise of social scientists available and intelligible to a wide reading public, the SSRC produces a range of printed books and digital publications. These include the Council's imprint, SSRC Books, publications with major university and independent presses, and various online products such as SSRC forums, the quarterly *Items and Issues*, and digital books. SSRC publications are quality productions that inform public debates and discussions, bringing timely and necessary knowledge to the public sphere.

Similarly to other regional programs at the Council, the Eurasia program seeks to develop new directions for scholarship on this region, and to provide opportunities for international networking and collaborative research. The program's geographical reach includes the new states of Eurasia as well as Eastern European countries. The tremendous upheaval that this region has seen and continues to experience poses challenges for understanding societal transformations and also for existing modes of research and the training of a new generation of scholars. Researchers have to question the very notion of "region" given recent geo-political changes and have to avail themselves of resources and training that generally are assigned to different area studies departments.

The Eurasia program is working on a variety of themes including the following projects: "Hegemony, Social Justice and Social Movements," "Social Science Approaches to HIV/AIDs in the Russian Federation," "Teaching Islam in Eurasia," "Competing Histories of Central Asia." The program also has begun working on the Caucasus region and has sponsored dissertation workshops and contributed to conferences on this region (most notably at the University of Chicago in May 2007) as well as supporting some publications and documentation of recent scholarship on the region.

Again, we are very pleased to have supported and helped organize this current workshop with the assistance of "Circassianacademia." We very much hope that this is simply the first of many opportunities for collaboration and joint projects. Last but not least, I would like to extend my thanks to the Center for Strategic Studies in Abkhazia and to Mr. Oleg Damenia, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia, Sergei Shamba and Deputy Minister Maxim Gunjia for the warm welcome of this initiative, support and contributions to the workshop.

**Seteney Shami**  
**Program Director**  
**Eurasia Program / Middle East and North Africa Program**





**CSS, Center for Strategic Studies, Abkhazia**

**October 30, 2007, Sukhum**

**Conference Welcoming Remarks - "Towards a New Generation of Scholarship on the Caucasus"**

Dear visitors! Dear colleagues!

Allow me to welcome you and to wish you productive work.

The subjects that are brought to your attention for discussion may, at first sight, seem unexpected. At the same time, they are very much called for by current realities.

Today's postmodern world is very unusual and it is difficult to understand it by conventional means. In order to perceive the essence of what is occurring through unique processes, we need a special kind of approach, which, to paraphrase the well-known 20<sup>th</sup> century physicist, Niels Bohr, should be "crazy enough". It is a matter of importance to form a new analytical paradigm, without which it will be difficult to survive the conditions of a world undergoing dramatic shifts.

As the changes accelerate, the world becomes less stable and more complex. Under these conditions, mankind faces new demands that threaten the very existence of life on the planet. Whether or not it is possible to find adequate answers to these challenges depends, in many respects, on mankind itself.

Primary among these challenges are the oppositions between globalism and regionalism, integration and disintegration, nationalism and cultural integrity. During these struggles, the interactions among different countries and people, cultures and civilizations strengthen as they become interdependent. However, these interactions are not always constructive; at times they lead to destructive clashes among different peoples, countries, and civilizations.

In such a global context it is necessary to consider our region as a zone of increased interaction, oppositions, and, at times, danger. Today the Caucasus is at the center of a number of extremely powerful forces: geopolitical, ethno-political, cultural - civilizational. Here we find areas of common interests as well as contradictions as countries adhere to various social models and value systems. Rarely do these countries consider the interests of the people belonging to the regional communities within them.

It is not easy to find strategies for stable and safe regional development within this kaleidoscope of contradictions. That is why research is so important, research, to which this conference is devoted.

I thank you for your attention.

**Oleg Damenia**

**Director, Center for Strategic Studies, Abkhazia**



*CA, Circassianacademia,*

*October 30, 2007*

### ***Welcoming Remarks From Circassianacademia***

First of all, I would like to thank all those who are present here today at this first academic event in the Caucasus with which *Circassianacademia* is involved. I would also like to thank Professor Seteney Shami, Cemre Erciyes, Ergün Özgür and our Abkhazian hosts both from the Abkhaz State University and Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their great efforts to make this organisation possible. I also want to express my gratitude to the Social Science Research Council for the generous grant that they provided, without which some of our junior scholars who are Ph.D. and Masters students would probably not be here today.

While it is Ergün Özgür, Cemre Erciyes and Argun Başkan who have been running the group, organizing meetings and head-hunting for new members for the past few years and therefore it is they who deserve first and foremost to talk about *Circassianacademia*, I was kindly offered the floor first as I happen to be the one who officially set up *Circassianacademia* as a Yahoo Group back in 2001. I thus feel the obligation to tell you about how and why it was set up.

The need to create an Internet-based discussion platform to increase professional contacts amongst Circassian social scientists and social scientists working on Circassian related issues, both junior and senior level, began to be discussed while we, two masters students in UK universities, one of whom was me, and a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics – all Circassians from Turkey, were spending long hours debating Circassian-related topics in London between 2000 and 2001. Therefore it must be said that *Circassianacademia* is the brainchild of these three individuals.

On the one hand, in those days in Western academia, there were a handful of senior scholars such as Professor Hewitt, Professor Shami and Professor Colorusso, who had extensively worked on Abkhazo-Circassian issues in past two decades, and a small number of emerging scholars, whose works we were familiar with but with whom we were not in constant contact to facilitate academic interaction. On the other hand, because of the unique political situations in the countries where the majority of the Circassian Diaspora lived, neither Circassian Studies nor Caucasian Studies in general had developed in a way that would produce a circle of professional Circassian academics working on Circassian-related topics. Nonetheless, we also knew through our own social and professional networks that there existed a relatively large number of social scientists of Circassian background at various universities in Turkey, who may or may not have worked on Circassian-specific issues in the past academically but who had the academic training, ability and desire to do so when the conditions were created.

Therefore, the initial idea behind creating *Circassianacademia* as a Yahoo Group was to have a platform in the absence of well-established academic institutions to bring these Circassian and non-Circassian social scientists together to increase communication and exchange materials and ideas to help pave the way for Circassian Studies to become an area study as part of Caucasian Studies in the not too distant future. We wanted a dynamic and non-rigid structure that would be in keeping with the needs of the time. And this structure came in the form of an Internet group without any official affiliation with any

state, institution or and any other type of official structure. The Internet helped us transcend physical distances between members from countries as far away as Japan, the US and Turkey and facilitate the fast flow of ideas and exchange of materials that are essential to produce works in our fields. Although it is a closed group whose membership is by invitation only, members are not followers of a particular school of thought or political persuasion as *Circassianacademia* is merely a free platform for interaction amongst senior and junior scholars from around the world working on the Abkhaz and the Circassians.

Perhaps I should also briefly explain why we chose to name the group *Circassianacademia* despite that fact that we had Abkhaz-Abaza and Abkhazia in our areas of study and interest even in the early stages. Despite having different views on the terminology with regards to the meaning of the terms Circassian and Adyghe, as there was and still is such confusion about this especially in Turkey, where we all hailed from, we agreed on keeping the focus of the group on the Circassians and its related ethnic group Abkhaz-Abaza. We believed that due to wars and conflicts in Chechnya and Dagestan and the religious dimension involved, these regions were relatively better studied in academia worldwide. This is why we consciously limited our focus on the Western Caucasus.

As for the Abkhazian dimension of *Circassianacademia*, we had an understanding that the Circassians in Turkey were very aware of their cultural, historical and recent political closeness with the Abkhazians. And if there had been a discipline or an area study in social sciences as Circassian Studies, it would be very difficult to separate it from Abkhaz-Abaza Studies because of the aforementioned linguistic, cultural, historical and political closeness as well as the unique positions of the Ubykh and the Abaza that bridge Circassians and Abkhazians even closer. However at the time we did not have any Abkhaz-Abaza social scientists in our circles in Turkey thus we settled for the name *Circassianacademia*. Nonetheless, since then we have had dear Dr. Vladislav Chirikba as well as Ergün Özgür and other Abkhaz-Abaza members amongst us so that there is now a scope for the name to change if the need is felt across the board. I, for one, am in favour of this change as the terms I employ to refer to the larger community made up by Adyghe and the Abkhaz-Abaza is either Abkhazo-Circassian or Cherkess-Abkhaz. However one needs to note that in Turkey the term Circassian is employed in three forms: North Caucasian, Adyghe-Abkhaz or Adyghe only. And all these usages are widely common within the North Caucasians and have their adherents, which may explain why the majority of our Abkhaz-Abaza and Adyghe members from Turkey did not see a need to change the name *Circassianacademia* when it was put to vote last year. This means that we see the differences of opinion amongst the members not as something to clash on but something that would create vibrancy, bearing in mind the fact that we are dealing with one of the most ethnically heterogeneous regions of the world, where identities are fluid and conjectural at any rate. Therefore, while the name was not changed the consensus was established that the study focus of the group was on the Adyghe-Abkhaz within the wider arena of Caucasian Studies.

Finally, before I give the floor to the first panellist I would like to express my hope that this will be the first of our many gatherings with our Abkhazian hosts, who have gone to extra lengths to made us feel at home here and offered us every possible convenience, and that through these events and further cooperation we the members of *Circassianacademia* will make a contribution to the academic, scientific and cultural life of Abkhazia.

**Zeynel Abidin Besleney**

***Circassianacademia***

***Sukhum, October, 30 2007***

***Opening Remarks from Project Coordinator***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

*Bziyala shaabeyt, dobra pajaluwayt* and welcome to our conference, "Towards a New Generation of Scholarship on the Caucasus," organized by Circassianacademia (academic Yahoo group), the Social Science Research Council (USA), the Caucasus Business and Development Network (Turkey-Abkhazia), and the Center for Strategic Studies (Abkhazia). It will take place today and tomorrow.

On behalf of the first three organizations, I would like to speak about the origins of the idea of arranging a conference and the choice of Abkhazia as its location. The conference was proposed at the beginning of 2007 by members of the Circassianacademia group who were interested in learning about each other's academic studies and establishing links with researchers in the Caucasus. Several Circassianacademia members met in Istanbul with Seteney Shami, a Program Director at the Social Science Research Council in New York. After this meeting, Dr. Shami arranged preliminary funding for a conference and I was brought onboard as project consultant. I arranged a planning session with a group of Circassianacademia members in June 2007. Our goal was to hold the conference in the Caucasus – in Adigei, Abkhazia, Kabardino-Balkaria or Karachai-Cherkessia – and, at my urging, we decided to hold it in Abkhazia. Unfortunately, due to time restrictions we could not invite scholars from other parts of the Caucasus for this conference but our aim is to organize future conferences and to increase participation from the Caucasus.

In order to locate additional funds, I also began working as the Project Coordinator of the Caucasus Business and Development Network (CBDN) in Turkey in August 2007. Earlier, in February, we had decided to organize a second workshop in Abkhazia ("Perspectives for Further Cooperation: Role of Diasporas and Untapped Potential of Regional Cooperation," which will follow this conference on November 1<sup>st</sup>). Because of support for that workshop to the CBDN, we were able to use a small amount of their funding to pay some of the expenditures of our participants.

Meanwhile, after finishing the application process and with the assistance of Mr. Vladimir Avidzba (representative of Abkhazia in Turkey) we contacted the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia, Mr. Sergei Shamba. He contacted Mr. Oleg Damenia, the Director of the Center for Strategic Studies. Both agencies accepted our proposal and the Center for Strategic Studies has been our partner in Abkhazia. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Center for Strategic Studies have helped us greatly in organizing this conference. I want to thank Mr. Shamba and Mr. Dameina for all of their efforts and assistance. Moreover, I want to thank Mr. Maxim Gunjia (the Deputy Foreign Minister of Abkhazia) who helped us with every detail, Circassianacademia member Cemre Erciyes who dealt with all the organizational matters, and Setenay Nil Doğan, Cansu Deneş Oktay and Jansel Baran.

I hope we will have an exciting, efficient and enriching conference, which will be repeated in the future with an even more diverse group of participants from all over the world.

***Ergün Özgür***

***Project Coordinator***

## **State, Society and Citizenship**



## ABKHAZO-ADYGHEAN LANGUAGES AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS TO SECURE THEIR FUTURE<sup>1</sup>

*Viacheslav A. Chirikba*<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, I shall discuss the global problem of language endangerment and how it pertains to the Abkhazo-Adyghean languages; I shall also put forward some proposals concerned with securing the future of these languages both in the Caucasus and in the Diaspora.

### Language Endangerment

Language, as is well known, is an essential part of any culture and an important component and tool of human civilization. There are languages spoken by many millions of people, like Chinese, Spanish or English, and languages spoken by very small communities, often the size of a village, or even a small group in a village. It is evident that today, in a time of globalization and mass communication, small linguistic communities are under enormous pressure, and are forced into vicious competition for survival with bigger languages. And more often than not, they are losing this uneven struggle and, sadly, disappear.

In general, the current situation with the world's linguistic diversity is very grave. Some linguists believe that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century nearly half of the 6,000 languages spoken in the world today will be doomed or will disappear altogether. There are much more funds allocated and attention paid to disappearing plants and animals species than to disappearing minority cultures and languages. Some would even argue whether or not we should support endangered languages and if they are really needed if, in fact, they are doomed to disappear anyway? Well, the answer is yes, we need them. Any language, however small, is a part of our common human cultural heritage. Any language is the product of a long process of historical development, and each one is unique in its system, structure and vocabulary. Moreover, language forms an essential part of a small community's identity. Language death is very often a sign of a particular community's death, not necessarily physical, but cultural, which is no less tragic. The sad fate of Ubykh, a West Caucasian language discussed below, provides a cautionary illustration.

There are very subtle mechanisms at play when we analyze the situation with small languages. Sometimes it is a kind of a mystery, why some minority languages, even those in a seemingly unfavorable environment, display resilience and determination to survive, whereas others, even ones with many more speakers, are losing the battle and stop being spoken or transferred to the next generation. If we look for examples from modern societies, some optimistic cases are the situation with Basque in Spain and with Welsh in Great Britain. A unique example of the revival of a virtually dead language is Hebrew, now a fully functional modern language in the state of Israel. There are also attempts to revive the extinct Celtic Cornish language spoken until the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the southwest of Great Britain. However, these examples are few, and more often we witness a contrary situation of rapid language decline and even death. And this happens sometimes even in seemingly favorable conditions. Take, for example, Irish Gaelic spoken in The Republic of Ireland, where it is the official language of the state: despite tremendous governmental support, the population at large prefers to use English, not Irish.

In certain cases language decline reaches a point of non-return, when it is nearly impossible to motivate people to use their native tongues and pass them on to younger generations. Another factor, which can disturb the balance and cause the language to decline, is the change of geographic and social environments. From this point of view, the linguistic situation in Daghestan in the Caucasus is very

instructive. Here, unlike many other places of the world, many, even the smallest linguistic communities, show a steady tendency to growth, displaying no signs of decline, despite a multilingual context and steady pressures from bigger neighbouring languages. Yet the situation changes radically when members of these communities are resettled from the mountain villages to the lowlands where, in a different geographic and socio-economic setting, they rather quickly stop using their native tongue and shift to the language(s) of their more numerous neighbours. It is thus very important to know all the factors and mechanisms which can be potentially dangerous for the normal functioning of a language. This knowledge could assist in timely interventions to counterbalance the adverse effect of one or another factor. But this is, of course, in no way an easy task.

### Languages Spoken in the Caucasus

Out of the many languages spoken in the Caucasus, only three genetic groupings are known to be indigenous and were spoken in the Caucasus area well before the appearance of Indo-European, Turkic or Semitic languages. These are: Abkhazo-Adyghean, or West Caucasian, spoken in the northwestern Caucasus and western Transcaucasus; Nakh-Daghestanian, or East Caucasian, spoken in the north-central and northeastern Caucasus; and Kartvelian, or South Caucasian, spoken in the southern Caucasus. The West Caucasian and East Caucasian branches have been demonstrated – in works by Russian linguists S. Trubetzkoy (1922, 1930), N. Nikolayev and S. Starostin (1994), and A. Abdokov (1983) – to be linguistically related and together form the North Caucasian linguistic family. On the other hand, the North Caucasian and the Kartvelian language families are not genetically related to each other. Apart from these indigenous Caucasian idioms, there are also Indo-European Ossetic, Armenian, Tat, Talysh, Kurdish and Russian, as well as Turkic Azeri, (Anatolian) Turkish, Karachay-Balkar, Kumyk and Nogay. One can add here as well Indo-European Greek and Semitic Neo-Aramaic (called “Aysor” in the Caucasus). The following table summarizes the languages of the Caucasus and their genetic affiliations (see also **Table 1** Languages Spoken in the Caucasus).



Figure 1 Linguistic Map of the Caucasus

**Table 1** Languages Spoken in the Caucasus

Language family	Branch	Group	Language(s)
Kartvelian (or South Caucasian)		East Kartvelian	Georgian
		West Kartvelian	Megrelian, Laz
		Svan	Svan
North Caucasian	West Caucasian	Abkhaz	Abkhaz, Abaza
		Circassian	Adyghe, Kabardian
		Ubykh	Ubykh
	East Caucasian	Avar	Avar
		Andi	Andi, Akhvakh, Karata, Botlikh, Godoberi, Bagvala, Chamala, Tindi
		Tsez	Tsez, Khvarshi, Hinukh, Bezhta, Hunzib
		Lak	Lak
		Dargi	Dargi (with Kubachi, Megeb, etc.)
		Lezgi	Lezgi, Tabasaran, Aghul, Rutul, Tsakhur, Udi, Kryz, Budukh, Archi
		Khinalug	Khinalug
Nakh	Chechen, Ingush, Bats		
Indo-European	Iranian	North-Eastern	Ossetic
		North-Western	Talysh, Kurdish
		South-Western	Tat
	Armenian		Armenian
	Slavic	East Slavic	Russian
	Greek	Northern	Pontic Greek, Tsalka-Alaverdy (< Cappadocian)
Turkic		North-Western (Kypchak)	Karachay-Balkar, Kumyk, Nogay
		South-Western (Oghuz)	Azeri, Turkish
Afroasiatic	Semitic	West-Central	Neo-Aramaic (Aysor)

### The Abkhazo-Adyghean Languages

The West Caucasian, or Abkhazo-Adyghean, linguistic branch consists of five languages, namely, Abkhaz and Abaza, Adyghe and Kabardian, and Ubykh. Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the speakers of these languages were concentrated in the Northwestern Caucasus and the adjoining part of western Transcaucasia from the mouth of the Kuban river in the northwest to the Ingur River in the southeast and the contemporary city of Mozdok in the northeast, while in the south the waters of the Black Sea served as a natural boundary to this ethnolinguistic area. In the northwest of this territory lived the Adyghe tribes including the Shapsugh, Abadzakh, Temirgoy, Bzhadugh and Natukhay; the northeast was occupied by Kabardians, and the southeast by Abkhazians. Between the Abkhazians and Shapsughians, in the region of the contemporary city of Sochi, lived the Ubykhs. Finally, on the northern slopes of the Great Caucasus range, in the valleys of the rivers Great and Little Zelenchuk and Kuma, lived the Abazas. The number of speakers of the West Caucasian languages in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century apparently comprised about 1 million (or even somewhat more), the majority of whom were Circassians, West and East. The number of Adyghes (i.e., West Circassians) at that time is estimated at between 700,000 to 750,000 (Pokrovskij 1958). As to East Circassians (Kabardians), their number, including the Besleneys,

totaled 55,000 (Balkarov 1959: 15). Thus, the number of all Circassians before the exodus was probably about 800,000, though some authors argue that their pre-emigration number was more than one million (cf. Dzidzarija 1982: 212). The pre-exodus number of Abazas (i.e., both the Tapanta and Ashkharywa groups) can be estimated at about 40,000 to 50,000. According to historical documents, between 30,000 to 40,000 Abazas emigrated (cf. Dzidzarija 1982: 213). The pre-exodus number of Abkhazians proper was more than 130,000 (cf. Dzidzarija 1982: 161, 213, 289). Thus, before emigration there were about 170,000 to 180,000 speakers of different Abkhaz-Abaza dialects in the West Caucasus. The estimates for the number of Ubykhs before emigration are between 30,000 and 40,000.

The devastating Caucasian war, which was waged by fire and sword during several decades by Tsarist Russia aiming to conquer the Northern Caucasus, dramatically changed the entire ethnolinguistic landscape of the West Caucasus region. Most of the Abkhazo-Adyghean speaking peoples had to flee to the Ottoman Empire, and this forced emigration, during which many thousands died of hunger and epidemic diseases, resulted in the present sparseness of the Abkhazo-Adyghean population in their historical territory. In contrast to approximately one million Circassians in the middle of the previous century, after the Caucasian war and emigration there were only about 100,000 left in the Caucasus (Dzidzarija 1982: 212). The post-emigration number of Tapanta and Ashkharywa was about 10,000. According to the 1897 All-Russia census, there were 58,697 Abkhazians left in Abkhazia (Dzidzarija 1982: 447). As for the Ubykhs, the western Abkhazian tribes Sadz and Tswidzhi, and the mountain Abkhazian tribes (Ahchypsy, Aibga, Pskhwy, Guma, Abzhaqwa, Dal-Tsabal) – they were all expelled to Turkey.

According to 2002 All-Russia census data, the number of Karbardian speakers in the Russian Federation is 580,475 (including Kabardians of Kabarda-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkesia and elsewhere in Russia); the number of Adyghe speakers (Temirgoy, Bzhadugh, Shapsugh, Abadzakh, etc.) in the Russian Federation is 131,759; and the number of Abaza speakers in the Russian Federation is 37,942 (cf. <http://www.perepis2002.ru>). The Abkhazians number around 100,000, the majority of whom live in the de-facto independent Republic of Abkhazia as well as outside of Abkhazia, mainly in Russia.

It is far more difficult to provide statistics about the number of the Abkhazo-Adyghean communities in the Diaspora. The largest West Caucasian Diaspora community is in the Republic of Turkey. Although the exact figures are not known, there is no doubt that there are more Circassians and Abkhazians living in Turkey than in the Caucasus or anywhere else: an estimated two to three million Adyghe speakers and 200,000 to half a million Abkhaz-Abaza speakers. The Ubykhs, numbering probably some 15,000 to 20,000 people, are bilingual in some forms of Adyghe (mainly Shapsugh or Abadzakh) and Turkish, or are monolingual in Turkish, although they identify themselves mainly with the Circassians (Turkish: *Çerkes*).

Besides Turkey, there are large Circassian communities in Syria and Jordan, and smaller Circassian and Abkhaz groups in other countries of the Middle East, as well as in Western Europe, the United States and Canada.

Strictly linguistically, it is actually more accurate to speak in terms of three West Caucasian languages: Abkhaz-Abaza, Circassian/Adyghe, and Ubykh, because there is a considerable level of mutual comprehension between Tapanta/Ashuwa Abaza and Abkhaz, on the one hand, and Adyghe and Kabardian, on the other hand. They can thus be regarded as dialects of Abkhaz-Abaza and Circassian, respectively. From phonological, grammatical, and lexical perspectives, Ubykh occupies an intermediate position between the Abkhaz and Circassian branches.

### Language Endangerment in the Western Caucasus

There are different types of language endangerment. Usually, a certain language is regarded as being endangered when there are only a few speakers left; with the death of these last speakers the language can also be declared dead. For instance, at present in Europe and Asia as many as 90 languages can now be regarded as nearly extinct, as there are only a few elderly speakers of these languages still living. In other cases there are still many speakers of a certain language, but these speakers have stopped using their native tongue, are not passing it to the next generation, and prefer to communicate in another language.

What can be said about the West Caucasian languages from the point of view of language endangerment? The most tragic is the fate of Ubykh. The last speaker of Ubykh, the famous Tevfik Esenç, died at the age of 88 on 7 October 1992 in the Western Turkish village of Hacı Osman Köyü<sup>3</sup>. For the more fortunate of Ubykh's sister-languages, we can say with certainty that in the Caucasus only Kabardian (East Circassian) has good prospects for survival, as it is spoken by a large community in the Kabarda-Balkar Republic, numbering nearly half a million (498,702, according to the 2002 census, which is 55.32 % of the total population), and also in the Karachay-Cherkes Republic (49,591 Kabardians/Cherkes, comprising 11.28 % of the population). The situation is less secure with Adyghe, which is spoken mainly in the Adyghey Republic, where the Adyghees are a small minority (108,115, comprising 24.18 % of the total population) and are under significant pressure from the Russian language (Russians constitute 64.48 % of the republic's population). The position of Abaza, spoken in the Karachay-Cherkes Republic by 32,346 people (or 7.36 % of the republic's population), is also not secure, as the Abaza language undergoes pressures both from Kabardian and from Russian (33.65 % of the population in this republic is Russian). NB: the 2002 census percentage figures are from <http://www.mojgorod.ru/regs/list.html>.

The situation is even more dramatic with the Abkhaz language. This is paradoxical, because Abkhaz is the official language of the state; there are Abkhaz kindergartens, school and university courses, and Abkhaz-language television, radio and press. However, Abkhaz is at a disadvantage due to the demographic weakness of its speakers in the cities and the fact that in the multiethnic milieu of Abkhazia's urban centers the undisputed *lingua franca* is Russian. Russian exerts enormous pressure on Abkhaz: it dominates the streets of the cities and the markets; it is the language of the government bureaucracy, the parliament, higher education, the media and business.

Although the prestige of Abkhaz has risen significantly over the past decades, and there is now more awareness among parents about the importance of teaching it to their children, the overall influence of Russian in urban parts of Abkhazia is still so overwhelming that it nearly neutralizes these recent positive trends and adversely affects native language competence among the younger generation of urban Abkhazians. There are many urban Abkhaz families, who, although possessing a full command of Abkhaz, prefer to use Russian in everyday life. Many of these families do send their children to Abkhaz schools, and there, from the first to the third grade, the language of instruction is Abkhaz. Many children of Russian-speaking Abkhaz urban families therefore learn, as their only opportunity, their native tongue in school. And the results are extremely successful. But the situation changes abruptly in the fourth grade, when the language of instruction shifts from Abkhaz to Russian. There are no schools in Abkhazia with a full educational cycle in Abkhaz. And from the fourth grade on, the children virtually stop using the native idiom during the educational process, aside from native language and literature lessons once or twice a week, and shift nearly exclusively to Russian.

**Table 2** The Number of Ethnic Abkhaz Pupils in Abkhaz and Russian schools in Abkhazia<sup>4</sup>

1	Number of schools	169	%
2	Total number of pupils of all nationalities	26,220	
3	Total number of ethnic Abkhaz pupils	15,185	100
4	Number of Abkhazians who attend Abkhaz schools	9,358	61.63
5	Number of Abkhazians who attend Abkhaz sectors of two-sector (Abkhaz and Russian) schools	1,209	7.96
6	Number of Abkhazians who attend Russian schools or Russian sectors of two-sector schools	4,618	30.41

Source: Ministry of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia

The data given in Table 2 show that the parents of more than 30% of the Abkhaz pupils prefer to send their children to Russian schools, not to Abkhaz schools or to Abkhaz sectors of two-sector schools.

Another adverse factor is that due to the unfavorable economic conditions in the rural areas, many young Abkhazians prefer to leave their village homes and move to the cities, where in the multiethnic milieu they are forced to use Russian. Coming from the village and being aware of their own inadequacy in Russian, they choose to give their children the advantages associated with a good command of the majority language by sending them, for example, to Russian schools. Although Abkhaz is still the only language used in the villages, the influence of nearby cities, where family members might work, the predominantly Russian language educational system, as well as the ever-present television have contributed to the increasing penetration of Russian into the rural areas.

This rather alarming situation presents a significant challenge to Abkhaz society. I would like to emphasize that currently there is no effort underway to require members of other ethnic groups in Abkhazia – Russians, Armenians, Georgians and others – to use Abkhaz. The learning of Abkhaz, the official language of the state, by non-Abkhaz communities should of course be encouraged, and the Abkhaz language is indeed present in the school curriculum of non-Abkhaz schools. However, the biggest problem is how to motivate the urban Abkhazians themselves to use their mother tongue and, no less importantly, to pass it on to their children.

Thus, Abkhaz should be regarded as more endangered than its sister-languages. It is obvious that serious governmental efforts should be undertaken in order to reverse these negative trends and to secure both the full functionality of Abkhaz within the framework of state institutions, including the educational cycle and sectors of bureaucracy, and the future fate of the Abkhaz language, reaching out especially to the younger generations.

#### **Language Endangerment in the Diaspora**

Much more alarming is the state of Adyghe-Abkhaz languages in the Diaspora. The situation there is somewhat paradoxical: there are still plenty of competent speakers of West Caucasian languages. Yet, some twenty or thirty years ago many of them stopped passing their language to their children, with the result that there now exists a striking gap between the often excellent native language competence of the parents and a near-zero knowledge of it by their children. This situation is characteristic of both urban and rural population groups, as the villages in this respect by and large are only in a slightly better position. Sadly, the described situation is not a trend or a tendency, but a predominant phenomenon. The knowledge of their native tongue by Circassian or Abkhaz children in most parts of Turkey can now be regarded as more of an exception rather than a rule. This kind of language decline might be called

“linguistic suicide”, when a community “decides” to discontinue the life of its native tongue, does not pass it to the children and shifts to another language.

Both empirical evidence and specialized studies indicate that Circassian and Abkhaz are highly endangered and undergoing a rapid process of decline in the Diaspora. It appears that without special measures the fate of these languages is doomed. Speaking about the situation in Turkey, the last several decades witnessed a dynamic process of urbanization and modernization of Turkish society paralleled by the increasing importance of linguistic competence in Turkish in virtually every aspect of life. Another general factor is the large-scale internal migration, for economic reasons, from rural villages, with their traditional socio-cultural environment, more favorable for the preservation of native tongues, to the cities, natural melting pots of cultures. This process, which has fully involved the Circassian and Abkhaz communities, also accelerates shifts in language preference and use. Another additional important factor is television broadcasts in majority languages, which weaken the viability of minority languages as they penetrate even the remotest areas.

This general pessimistic conclusion about the present state of the West Caucasian languages in the Diaspora can be corroborated by recent socio-economic and statistical studies conducted on the Circassian and Abkhaz/Abaza communities in Turkey. One such welcome study is the book *Doğu Akdeniz'deki Çerkesler* [Circassians of the Eastern Mediterranean] authored by Dr. Cahit Aslan and published by the Adana Caucasian Cultural Society (2005). Regarding native language competence within the Abkhazo-Adyghean community in the Adana province, Aslan provides the following breakdown, summarized in Table 3:

**Table 3** The Level of Language Competence<sup>5</sup>

Ethnic group	Zero competence		Can understand		Can speak		Can write		Total	
		%		%		%		%		%
Adyghe	953	15.9	1104	18.4	<b>3758</b>	<b>62.9</b>	93	1.5	5968	100.0
Abaza	109	19.0	124	21.6	<b>334</b>	<b>58.2</b>	6	1.0	573	100.0

These data can create an impression that things are not that bad after all: nearly 63% of the community members are competent speakers. However, this impression changes when we look at the age parameters of competent speakers:

**Table 4** The Level of Language Competence According to Age Group<sup>6</sup>

Age group	Zero competence		Can understand		Can speak		Can write		Total	
		%		%		%		%		%
0-10	419	62.3	176	26.1	<b>74</b>	<b>11.0</b>	3	0.4	672	100.0
11-20	454	33.9	523	39.0	<b>343</b>	<b>25.6</b>	19	1.4	1339	100.0
21-30	326	24.0	349	25.7	<b>656</b>	<b>48.4</b>	22	1.6	1353	100.0
31-40	152	15.8	137	14.3	<b>654</b>	<b>68.2</b>	15	1.5	958	100.0
41-50	126	11.8	119	11.1	<b>783</b>	<b>73.6</b>	35	3.2	1063	100.0
51-60	91	9.8	56	6.0	<b>761</b>	<b>82.0</b>	19	2.0	927	100.0
60 and older	49	4.8	29	2.8	<b>910</b>	<b>90.8</b>	14	1.3	1002	100.0
All ages	1617	22.1	1389	18.9	<b>4181</b>	<b>57.1</b>	127	1.7	7314	100.0

These figures clearly demonstrate a steady language decline and a dramatic gap in the language competence between the older and the younger generations: from 90.8% among those who are 60 years of age and older, to a meager 11% among young children up to 10 years of age. The general conclusion following from this statistics would be that nearly 90 % of Circassians and Abazas/Abkhazians living in the Adana province do not transmit their native tongues to their children anymore.

There is evidence that the situation in other regions of Turkey would be close to that described here, or sometimes probably even worse. For example, as far as the Abkhaz communities in the north-central parts of Anatolia are concerned, the level of native language competence among the children up to 10 years of age are most likely even lower than the figures available for Adana. I have traveled rather extensively in that part of Turkey collecting linguistic material and folklore, and I can say that during my visits, with a single exception, I have not met any Abkhaz family that is raising its children in the native tongue, contrary to the situation that existed some 25 years ago. The youngest speakers of Abkhaz in Turkey are thus now in their thirties, and this is the last generation of competent speakers. Younger Abkhazians may understand the native tongue to a greater or lesser extent, but this rarely results in its full mastery, although there are of course individual cases to the contrary.<sup>7</sup> Again, in the Diaspora too, Abkhaz is more endangered compared to Circassian.

### **What Can and Should Be Done?**

The convening of recent conferences by the Caucasian Diaspora community in Turkey demonstrates the recognition of the importance of preserving native heritage – including languages – among community members. This is reflected in Aslan's previously cited study where 43.5% of the respondents believe that the learning of native tongues is very important (2005: 57). There is thus at least voiced interest in preserving these native languages and transmitting them to the younger generations. But what can be proposed as concrete measures, which could secure the future of the West Caucasian languages both in the Caucasus and in the Diaspora?

In the Caucasus, possible guidelines and recommendations include:

- Raising the prestige of native languages;
- Further expansion of pre-school, primary and secondary school and university instruction in native languages. This would entail, for instance, an increase in the time allotted to native language study. Speaking specifically about Abkhazia, although it would be an enormously difficult task to shift the entire curriculum for Abkhaz pupils completely into Abkhaz, one which may not even be feasible in the immediate future, it is however quite possible to shift at least some of the subjects now taught in Russian into Abkhaz. This will create the necessary continuity between the first three grades, which are nearly exclusively in Abkhaz, and the next eight grades, which are nearly exclusively in Russian, a gap that most adversely affects the motivation and general competence in Abkhaz of young people;
- An increase in the funding of native language schools, especially in the rural areas, and the substantial raising of salaries for teachers of native languages;
- The partial shift of the language of governmental institutions into official native languages; and
- An increase in the funding of the local television stations to expand native language TV broadcasts and to improve the quality of these TV programmes.

Regarding other measures, it is very important to set up small enterprises or factories in the rural areas, so that the young people could find work there and are not forced to migrate to the cities looking for jobs. Another factor is the availability of cultural and sports facilities in the rural areas which would also diminish the need for the young people to move to the cities. Speaking about the situation in Abkhazia, it



is important to provide material support for the young families with two or more children, which could positively influence the present unfavorable demographic situation in the republic. These and similar measures could, it is hoped, reverse the current negative trends and make Abkhaz, Abaza, Adyghe and Kabardian fully functional languages in all spheres of life in their societies.

In the Diaspora, where the conditions are naturally quite different from those in the Caucasus, other remedial methods are needed. Despite the overall negative picture, there are several important factors, which can be built upon to improve the situation, provided, of course, that energetic efforts by the respective communities are made. These positive factors are:

- Still a significant number of competent speakers;
- New possibilities, both national and international, to acquire financial means needed for the language revitalization programs;
- The undoubted motivation of groups of younger members of the Diaspora community to master their parental language(s). It is very important that many of those young West Caucasians, who do not speak their parents' tongue, still have at least rudimentary, and some even more than rudimentary, level of prior knowledge of the native tongue, acquired through the communication within the family; and
- The availability of intellectual, technical and financial support from the Caucasian homeland.

All of this signifies that the situation, while dramatic, is not yet desperate, and the combination of financial resources and concerted efforts on the part of members of the Diaspora community could turn the tide and substantially improve the prognosis. First of all, what is needed is the maximization of opportunities provided by the newly implemented Turkish laws concerning the languages of ethnic minorities. Among the concrete measures aimed at the ameliorating problems surrounding native language competence are:

- The organization of native language classes (like those functioning, for example, rather successfully in Moscow), or even broader private schools, which would combine the standard governmental educational programs with some subjects (especially, language and literature) in the native language;
- Preparing school textbooks and appealing children's books with parallel texts in both native and official languages;
- Training local teachers in native languages, which is already being planned in some cases;
- Creating or importing interesting TV programmes in native languages;
- Developing computer programs to help individuals learn native languages;
- Developing websites in the native tongues, with parallel functions to those of the official language;
- Organizing educational trips to the Caucasus, where community members, most of all young people, could participate in intensive language and culture courses while experiencing living in the homeland environment.

It is obvious that more scientific research work along the lines of that presented by Aslan (*Op cit.*) is urgently needed for both the Diaspora and the Caucasus, which could elucidate the dynamics of language endangerment within various Abkhazo-Adyghean communities and suggest ways to overcome negative trends.

In addition, it is necessary to emphasize the great importance of documenting the languages, oral history and folklore of the Abkhazo-Adyghean Diaspora communities. Much has already been done in this field,

but such efforts should acquire a more systematic and organized character. It would also be important to set up one or more museums and archives of the Diaspora, where personal papers, manuscripts, books, newspapers and magazines, photographs, audio and video recordings and various other documents pertaining to the history and cultural life of the Diaspora could be collected, preserved, exhibited and published.

These are just some possible measures, which could help slow down the process of language decline and sustain a reasonable level of native language competence, especially among the younger generations of the Diaspora community. To achieve these goals, the Diaspora community in Turkey should avail itself of the opportunities provided by Turkish governmental institutions, special international funds created to support minority languages and cultures, and collaboration with the governmental and private educational institutions in the Caucasus, which should be fully used to promote educational programs in the native languages in the Diaspora.

### **The Alphabet Debate**

The last issue, which will be touched upon very briefly, is the problem of a common alphabet for Abkhazo-Adyghean languages. There has been much discussion concerning the basis for such an alphabet and whether it should be based on the existing Cyrillic orthographies used in the Caucasus, or modeled on the Latin alphabet.

Given the numerical importance of the West Caucasian community in Turkey, I am convinced, as are a number of my colleagues, that any common Latin-based system should be built on the present Turkish alphabet. I myself have developed one version of such a Latinized Turkish-based system for Abkhaz/Abaza and Circassian, which I am preparing for publication. Professor George Hewitt and Dr. Monika Höhlig have proposed other versions (Hewitt 1995; Höhlig 1983). There have also been attempts in the Caucasus to create Latin-based alphabets not oriented on Turkish orthography, which I consider less desirable.

There has been a heated debate in the Diaspora community on the feasibility of introducing a unified Latin-based orthography for all Abkhazo-Adyghean languages when there is already a nearly century-long Cyrillic-based system in the Caucasus. Indeed, though the idea of promoting a common Latin-based alphabet for Abkhazo-Adyghean peoples is extremely appealing, as it would further enhance the sense of unity between these closely related cultures and would allow for better communication between the Caucasus and the Diaspora, the practical implementation of this idea meets with nearly insurmountable difficulties, and besides the significant financial consequences of such a step, this shift would inevitably sever the long Cyrillic-based literary tradition in the Caucasus and create undesirable difficulties for later generations in accessing their literary heritage.

However, according to data assembled in Aslan's study, out of 1766 respondents representing the Circassian and Abkhaz/Abaza community in the Adana province, 63% advocated the introduction of the Latin-based system, and only 31,8% favored the Cyrillic-based system (Aslan 2005: 57). One way to address this dilemma would be the introduction of a parallel Latin-based alphabet, both in the Caucasus and in the Diaspora, as was done, for instance, in Moldova. Time would tell whether a Latin-based system would be more successful than the traditional and well-established Cyrillic one.

### **Conclusion**

In this time of globalization it is a challenge for every nation, big or small, to preserve its own cultural identity and to be modern without losing its unique character. For the members of minority cultures the task is often nearly insurmountable, as such efforts need huge financial resources and the enthusiastic

efforts of the community at large. However, as the optimistic examples cited at the beginning of this chapter demonstrate, sincere efforts can bring about positive results and the battle is not lost as long as there are still a considerable number of competent and motivated speakers. It is hoped that welcome initiatives by the North Caucasian community to enhance the situation of native tongues in the Diaspora, as well as willingness to work in harmonious collaboration with the Turkish government, will help slow down the process of native languages decline and, hopefully, eventually reverse it.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally presented at the conference “*The Endangered Languages of the World and the Case of Adyghe-Abkhaz Languages*” organized by the Federation of the Caucasian Associations, 1 July 2006, Ankara.

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<sup>3</sup> I was extremely fortunate to have met and worked with Tevfik Esenç in his native village one day in Dec.1991.

<sup>4</sup> This data is as of 11.09.2008 r.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Aslan 2005, 5. Bolded emphasis added by me – V. Ch.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Aslan 2005, 53. Bolded emphasis added by me – V. Ch.

<sup>7</sup> Note that in the mixed Turkish Abkhazian-Caucasian Abkhazian families, the children are normally raised bilingual in both Abkhaz and Turkish, making it thus a welcome, but rare, exception to the general rule.

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# NGOs IN ABKHAZIA AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE COUNTRY <sup>1</sup>

*Ergün Özgür<sup>2</sup>*

## Introduction

The Republic of Abkhazia is an unrecognized country, under embargo and trying to build a democratic nation-state.<sup>3</sup> Abkhazians have elected their president successfully despite outside manipulations and pressures from Georgia and Russia. The NGOs of Abkhazia came together before the presidential elections of 2003 and 2004, established the "League for Fair Elections" and contributed greatly to the democratization process in the country. They trained their members, invited foreign observers during the presidential elections and worked as volunteer observers during the election period. They made this effort in order to demonstrate to the world that there could be democratic, fair, free and just elections in an unrecognized country.

## The Meaning of an NGO in the West and in Abkhazia

Most simply, we may describe a "non-governmental organization" (NGO) as an organization that is not part of a government and not financed by that government. The most important characteristic of NGOs is their independence from governments. They deal with cultural, environmental, legal and social projects and are motivated by serving the public good, not by earning profits. Their staffs generally work voluntarily on a per project basis because their social aims which are more important than earning an income. Therefore, NGOs promote civil society.

The notion of civil society first became popular with the 1968 European student movements. Critics of the existing political situations increasingly voiced their concerns about alternative lifestyles, environmentalism, feminism, etc. (Sancar, 2000, 19-32). In the 1970s, the term "civil society" came into public discourse as "*sociedad civil*". This phrase was used by opposition groups in Eastern and Central European countries. In the 1990s, the rapid globalization resulting from the development of transportation and information technologies led to an increase in the world's NGOs.

When considering globalization, it is not possible to talk about nation-states as the only actors in the global system. We also have to take into account individuals, organizations, media and corporations (Arıboğan, 2004, 2). Moreover, among the most important of them are the NGOs and international organizations focusing on people and civil society.

The establishment of the Western type of NGO in Abkhazia started during the *perestroika* years in the USSR. The first new-style non-profit organization was the Youth Creative Union, established in 1986 on the initiative of young people from the scientific and artistic communities in the Republic of Abkhazia.

The Georgian-Abkhazian War of 1992-1993 and the blockade subsequently imposed on Abkhazia in October 1995 also led to an increase in the number of NGOs in the country. Moreover, the unresolved conflict has also drawn the attention of international organizations to the region.

## Connections between NGOs in the Caucasus and Abkhazia

On July 19-26, 1998, representatives from North and South Caucasus NGOs founded the Caucasus Forum at the base of the Elbrus Mountain in the city of Nalchik. According to *The Elbrus Declaration*, which they published in pamphlet form after this meeting, the reason for establishing this forum was to develop civil society in this region that had been isolated from the rest of the world during the Soviet era. Their main objectives were:

- to strengthen trust and improve communication between the peoples of the Caucasus,
- to revive Caucasian culture, and

- to provide support for joint civil projects aimed at promoting tolerance, improving the level of political culture, raising civic awareness, reviving the traditions of peaceful coexistence, and overcoming ethnic hatred and prejudice<sup>4</sup>.

The Caucasus Forum was open to NGOs representing all regions and peoples of the Caucasus. Its members also expressed their concern about the growing tensions in the North Caucasus during this meeting. The founding session of the Caucasus Forum was made possible through the Confidence-Building Program for Georgians and Abkhazians, which was partly financed by TACIS (Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States), with additional assistance from International Alert.

### **Restrictions from the New NGO Law in the Russian Federation**

According to Liliana Proskuryakova, there were 600,000 NGOs in the Russian Federation at the end of 2005 (Proskuryakova 2005). Approximately 15,000 of them included human rights issues among the problems they addressed and 2,000 of them focused completely on defending human rights. Serious human rights violations in the North Caucasus and the continuing war in Chechnya are among the reasons for the continued presence of international NGOs in the region and also for the increased number of local NGOs (RFERL, 2005).

In 2006, Vladimir Putin, who was the President of the Russian Federation at the time, wanted to re-establish a strong Russia as it had been in the past. He was dissatisfied with the international NGOs and the rising number of local NGOs operating in Russia because of their connections with the West. Also, according to a report by Anatoli Medetski in the *Moscow Times*, the Kremlin was afraid of the possibility of civilian revolt in the Russian Federation similar to what happened in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. They were threatened by NGOs defending democratization, fighting for human rights, raising public consciousness, etc. (Medetski, 2005).

Although members of the local and international NGOs objected to the new NGO law, it was put into effect with some minor changes in April 2006. Putin imposed significant restrictions on NGOs via this law,<sup>5</sup> which gave the Russian Justice Ministry and the Federal Registration Service powers to limit and shut down the country's NGOs. In the two years since the passage of this law, the number of registered NGOs in Russia has dropped by more than half to an estimated 277,000 (Rodriguez, 2008). Despite the more liberal leanings of the current president, Dmitri Medvedev, this law remains in effect. For these reasons, the NGOs established in Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia, North and South Osetya, Ingushetia and Chechnya have been under increasing pressure from the newly implemented law, which may have negative consequences for their relationships with Abkhazian NGOs.

Although the NGOs of Abkhazia are not directly impacted by this law, it does affect them in terms of their relationships with North Caucasus NGOs and the Caucasus Forum, with whom they have very close connections, including joint projects based upon their shared ideals for their common Caucasus culture.

### **NGOs in Abkhazia – Local Organizations and International Partnerships**

According to official documents, Abkhazia is divided into seven districts: Gagra, Guadauta, Gal, Gulripsh, Ochamchira, Sukhum and Tkuarchal. We have conducted research among the registered NGOs in each of these regions. Article 2 of the Regulation *Concerning Non-Profit Organizations in the Republic of Abkhazia* describes a non-governmental organization as:

- An organization that does not place the generation of profit as the main objective of its activities, and does not distribute among shareholders any profit obtained from such activities.
- A non-profit organization may exist to serve social, charitable, cultural, educational or scientific ends to deliver programs designed to protect the health of citizens, to develop

sports activities, to satisfy spiritual or other non-material needs of citizens, to enhance the protection of human rights or legal rights of citizens or organizations, to work towards the resolution of conflict, to deliver legal consultancy, and to other ends directed towards the improvement of social welfare (quoted in Kuvichko, 2005, 7).

There are two publications about the NGOs of Abkhazia. The first one, *Inva-Sodeystvie (AIS)*, was published by the Association of Invalids of Abkhazia in 2000. The second publication, *Directory of Non-Governmental/Non-Profit Organizations of Abkhazia*, was prepared by the editor of the AIS in 2005 with the support of the UN Volunteers Program and was financed by the Italian Government in order to strengthen the NGO sector in Abkhazia. According to these two publications, the numbers of NGOs in Abkhazia were 38 and 71, respectively. Current estimates of the number of registered and re-registered NGOs after 2004 were more than 134. Therefore, we understand that the number of NGOs in Abkhazia is increasing rapidly.

We will discuss the international NGOs and the local NGOs separately. In the first group, there are eleven international organizations: *Accion Contra el Hambre* (works for food security and struggles against hunger), HALO Trust (eliminates land mines), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Doctors Without Borders/*Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Première Urgence* (PU), Save the Children, the SOROS Foundation and World Vision.

The International Red Cross was the first international organization to provide humanitarian aid to Abkhazia. It settled in Sukhum during the war in 1992 and is still providing surgical materials to Aguzera, Sukhum, and Tkuarchal hospitals as well as an orthopedic center in Gagra. It has engaged in other activities like protecting civil society, reuniting separated families, trying to find lost people, distributing food, etc. The second organization that settled in Abkhazia was MSF, which is the only organization directly fighting tuberculosis (*ibid.*, 43).

Almost all of the organizations currently in the country are dealing with basic needs, including food, shelter, medicine and health assistance as well as establishing trust, providing training, increasing people's consciousness about human rights, and various micro-level projects. Moreover, the HALO Trust deals with locating and removing land mines set during the war. The Refugee Council works with the refugees resettled in the Gal region just after the war and with refugees in Georgia (*ibid.*, 42).

The second international group is composed of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), and eight UN-related organizations. These include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia (UNHROAG), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the UNOMIG Trust Fund, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia Trust Fund, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Abkhazia (UNOCHA). They are based in Aitar, just south of Sukhum.

In the last group there are more than 26 different organizations. London-based Conciliation Resources (CR) has supported local NGOs for more than ten years. The 6<sup>th</sup> Summer University opened in October 2007 in Pitsunda and was organized by CR and two local NGOs, the Center for Humanitarian Programs (CHP) and the Media Club. Some of the other organizations are: Article XIX, US Agency for International Development (USAID), the American Council, Geneva Call (anti-land mines), the European Commission, Adopt-A-Minefield, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the Berghoff Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Young Quakers of Great Britain, the Swiss Humanitarian Association, Management-Berlin, the Caucasus

NGO Forum, the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding (CCPB) at the University of California-Irvine, *Kvinna Till Kvinna* (supporters of women organizations), the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (GCPP), OXFAM (struggles against hunger), War Child Holland, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), International Alert, and the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX).

The international NGOs of Abkhazia were re-registered after 2004 as were the local NGOs. In the Regulation *On the Registration Procedures of the Branches and Missions of the International NGOs in the Republic of Abkhazia*, an international NGO is described as “An organization established outside of the Republic of Abkhazia according to the legislation of a foreign state and oriented at social, charitable, cultural, educational and other socially profitable objectives...”<sup>6</sup>. Although the international NGOs and international organizations have their own activities, they are also very important for the local NGOs as fundraisers for their projects. Generally, they act as co-partners for the projects of the local NGOs because of their ability and connections with the world community.

When we looked at the locations of the NGOs, we saw that more than half of them (57%) were based in the Sukhum region. The popular tourism region of Gagra and Abkhazia’s Georgian border district Gal followed Sukhum with 14% and 12%, respectively. Gudauta was fourth with 10%, of the country’s NGOs, Tukarchal had 3%, and Ochamchira and Gulripsh each had 2% (see Table 1).

**Table 1** The Regional Distribution of Local NGOs in Abkhazia<sup>7</sup>

Region	Number	Percentage (%)
Sokhum	76	57%
Gagra	19	14%
Gal	16	12%
Gudauta	13	10%
Oçamçira	3	2%
Tukarçal	4	3%
Gulripş	3	2%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	134	100%

Although the number of NGOs in Abkhazia is increasing year by year, the number of really active NGOs is not more than forty. After the year 2000, the leaders of the different organizations were looking for ways of consolidating and coordinating their actions in order to communicate with governmental structures on an equal basis, to facilitate working in partnership with local administrations to participate in drafting essential laws, and to address the country’s numerous and complex social problems. One example of them is the establishment of a forum by organizations working on disability issues, which aimed to facilitate the process of cooperating with governmental structures. These disabled organizations also have a plan to establish a Coordinating Council within the Parliament of Abkhazia. A second example is The NGO Club, which is open to all organizations in Abkhazia. The NGO Club established a coalition called the “League for Fair Elections” that monitored the presidential elections. For the first time in their history, citizens became official observers of the election process (Kuvichko, 2005, 8; Özgür 2005, 8, 10-12).

The uniqueness of The NGO Club is its capacity to bring members of several NGOs together in order to organize joint programs for common benefit, solve social problems, work to obtaining equal rights, and similar efforts. The NGOs are publishing some newsletters to increase the awareness of the general public and they have also organized several programs on television to be a model for the people in expressing their opinions freely. One of the newsletters published by the Center for Humanitarian Programs is called *Grajdanskoye Obshestva* [Civil Society] and has been produced with the contributions of The NGO Club members almost every month for more than seven years; it is

distributed to the public at no cost. The *Panorama* newsletter is prepared jointly by Abkhaz and Georgian journalists in Russian and Georgian with the financial support of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting and Conciliation Resources. Moreover, a private radio station called "Radio Soma" is underwritten by Conciliation Resources.

When the League for Fair Elections was founded in 2004, Alkhas Thagushev, the director of the AIS, was selected as its head. Mr. Thagushev has been a member of the Abkhazian Parliament in 2005 serving on the Budget and Economy-Politics Committee.

### **Democratic Values within Abkhazian NGOs and Their Contribution to the Democratization of the Country During the Last Three Elections**<sup>8</sup>

In order to measure the strength of democratic values within Abkhazian NGOs and their contribution to the national democratization process, a questionnaire was prepared and sent to the members of active NGOs in April 2007. According to their answers, it may be stated that the NGOs were more active and impartial during the presidential elections of 3rd October 2004 and 12th January 2005. This was explained as the direct result of the activities of the League of Fair Elections.

According to the reports of the International Crisis Group in 2006, almost 200 volunteer activists of the League worked during the elections. Their activities included arranging TV programs and equal broadcast time for each of the five presidential nominees on state television in 2003. Each candidate had the opportunity to explain his position to the public, one night in Russian (in the first week) and one night in Abkhaz (in the second week).

Moreover, the League also arranged a public forum in Sukhum with television feeds for those people who wanted to ask direct questions of the nominees during their live broadcasts (Özgür, 2005, 10). NGOs involved in the League also participated in opening communication channels and encouraging dialog in the ongoing Georgian-Abkhaz conflict (ICG Report N° 176).

**Table 2** The October 3, 2004 Presidential Election Results in Abkhazia <sup>9</sup>

<b>Total Number of Voters</b>	<b>137,564</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Number of Votes Cast</b>	<b>86,525</b>	<b>62.90</b>
<b>Sergei Bagapsh</b>	43,336	50.08
<b>Raul Hacimba</b>	30,815	35.61
<b>Sergei Shamba</b>	5,993	6.93
<b>Anri Cergenia</b>	2,277	2.63
<b>Yakub Lakoba</b>	806	0.93
<b>Invalid Votes</b>	2,068	2.39
<b>Votes Against All 5 Nominees</b>	1,230	1.42

When one initially looks at the results of the 2004 presidential elections, it may appear that Sergei Bagapsh won the elections (summarized above in Table 2). But this result was not accepted and objections and protests occurred throughout the country. During this time, several different explanations were given by the Abkhaz Central Election Committee. According to the reports of the foreign observers and observers of the League for Fair Elections, the electrical power had gone off before the election ended in Gal District, so they advised that the elections there should be repeated. In addition, opposition elements wanted the repetition of the election in all regions. In the end there was an agreement among Sergei Bagaps, Raul Hacimba and temporary Prime Minister Nodar Hashba, with the mediation of two Russian officials, Duma member Sergei Baburin and Russian Public Prosecutor Vladimir Kalesnikov (Özgür, *Ibid.*, 11-12; Kızılbuğa, 2006, 87-88).



**Table 3** The January 12, 2005 Presidential Election Results in Abkhazia <sup>10</sup>

Total Number of Voters	129,127	Percentage (%)
Number of Votes Cast	75,733	58.65
Sergei Bagapsh	69,328	91.54
Yakub Lakoba	3,549	4.69
Invalid Votes	868	1.15
Votes Against Both Nominees	1,988	2.63

For the second election, most of the original nominees had withdrawn their candidacies and only two of them – Sergei Bagapsh and Yakub Lakoba – participated. According to an earlier agreement, the new vice president would be Raul Hacimba. Sergei Bagapsh won the repeated election in all regions of Abkhazia with 91.54% of the vote (summarized above in Table 3). He took office along with his new vice president on 12 February 2005 and the Prime Minister of the new government was Aleksandr Ankuab. During the second election, NGOs, League members, and observers worked very hard and carefully to ensure that there would be no further problems with the election results.

According to responses from the April 2007 questionnaire discussed earlier in this chapter, the League for Fair Elections contributed to equal, competitive and just elections in Abkhazia in 2004. In preparation for this event, the organization committee of the League trained their members, invited foreign observers and worked on a volunteer basis as observers during the election period. They had stated that their aim was to demonstrate to the world that there could be democratic, competitive, free and just elections in an unrecognized country. They also added that in order to maintain objectivity, they did not openly support any presidential candidates during the elections of 2004 and 2005.

On the other hand, respondents to the questionnaire stated that the NGOs of Abkhazia were more politicized during the local elections of 11 February 2007 and the parliamentary elections of 4 March and 18 March 2007. This was due to the fact that some of the candidates were themselves from several NGOs, and some them were elected to the municipality councils and the parliament.

One of the questions in the questionnaire directly addressed democracy in Abkhazia: “If we describe democracy in terms of the principles of liberal democracy, which is a representative democracy with free and fair elections along with the protection of minorities, the rule of law, separation of powers, and protection of freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, and property; do you think your NGO has contributed to the democratization of Abkhazia, and, if yes, please state how?” When we examined the answers given to this question we found that almost 69% of the respondents chose “yes” and “all of the above.” No one answered this question as “no” (detailed below in Table 4).

**Table 4** Responses about the Contribution of Abkhazian NGOs to Democratization

	Number	Percentage (%)
<b>YES i)</b> Contributed to the free and fair elections (during presidential, local and parliamentary elections) for representative democracy along with the protection of minorities	3	12
<b>YES + ii)</b> Helping to protect freedoms of speech, assembly, religion and/or property	3	12
<b>YES + iii)</b> Helping support the separation of powers and the rule of law	0	0
<b>YES + iv)</b> All of the above	18	69
<b>YES i) + ii)</b>	1	4
<b>YES i) + iii)</b>	1	4
<b>NO</b>	0	0

The questionnaire also included several questions designed to elicit responses regarding the degree to which democratic values were adhered to in the daily operations of Abkhazian NGOs. These were included because without the existence of democratic values in NGOs, it would be difficult to justify their efforts in working to democratize Abkhazia during the last three national elections.

Questions about working hours, decision-making processes, who made the final decisions about projects, information flow within the NGO, and the educational qualifications of the director were asked in the questionnaire. According to the 26 responses received, there was general consensus that there were flexible working hours on a per project basis. Secondly, the decision-making process was characterized as generally democratic, with more than 60% stating that their board of directors made the primary decisions about the projects but that the project managers could also make some changes during a project's lifetime. Also from the results, it was seen that the information flow was viewed as very strong – 70% – because there was not a strict hierarchy. Finally, most respondents felt that the directors had sufficient education and other capabilities for being good leaders.

We also examined the particular project sponsors of some NGOs in order to understand funding sources and fundraisers. This information was taken from published reports (cf., e.g., Kuvichko 2005; UNDP 2006) as well as the websites of several of the sponsors. Among 11 active and effective NGOs, only two were getting direct support from the Abkhazian state, the Abkhaz Red Cross and Red Crescent, and the AIS. It was reasonable for both of these organizations to benefit from Abkhazian health and work funds because they assisted disabled citizens, many of who were injured because of the hostilities with Georgia.

**Table 5** Funding Sources of Two NGOs

Local NGO	Funding Organization	
	<u>Local</u>	<u>Foreign</u>
Abkhazia Red Cross and Red Crescent	State	ICRC- International Red Cross and Red Crescent
AIS (Association of the Invalids of Abkhazia)	State -through Work and Health Fund	OSCE, European Commission, Conciliation Resources, Norwegian Government, OXFAM, UNDP, UNV

Therefore, in conclusion we can say that the local Abkhazian NGOs are autonomous from the government and receive their financial support for various projects from foreign funds, NGOs, persons and/or organizations.

### Conclusion

My purpose in this chapter has been to demonstrate that the NGOs of Abkhazia, despite their limited capabilities, are offering new opportunities to the public. They have helped in the process of integrating Abkhaz society into the world community by organizing seminars, trainings, publications and the like. In all of these efforts and more, they have contributed to the overall democratization of the country. They have attended conflict resolution meetings with Georgian representatives for more than ten years in order to share their experiences and try to explain their perspective. They continually advocate for democracy within the country by improving its laws and regulations and they work on a voluntary basis with special committees along with judges and parliamentarians in order to achieve these ends.

## NOTES

- 1 This paper was originally presented at the ESCAS Conference, METU, Ankara, 15 September 2007.
- 2 Ph.D. Candidate, Social Sciences Institute, Organizational Behavior, Marmara University, Turkey.
- 3 Abkhazia was recognized by the Russian Federation in August 2008 and by Nicaragua in September 2008.
- 4 Published in 1998 by the Caucasus NGO Forum as *The Elbrus Declaration* (Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria).
- 5 Nabi Abdullaev has pointed out that Russia's new NGO law is no more restrictive than those of Finland or France, and that no complaints from Finland (which has a stricter law) have been made to the Secretary of the European Council's Parliamentary Assembly Human Rights Committee (Abdullaev 2006).
- 6 See regulation *On the Registration Procedures of the Branches and Missions of the International NGOs in the Republic of Abkhazia*, 20 October 2005, Nb. PD-223 and article 1.
- 7 Sources: Kuvichko, *Directory of Non-Governmental/Non-Profit Organisations of Abkhazia*; Abkhazia Information Center's "Data about the help list supported by UN Development Program" (UNDP, *Help List*, 2005) and *The List of the Registered NGOs according to the Regulation N° 136* (2004) obtained from MFA, Republic of Abkhazia.
- 8 These elections were Presidential-2003/2004, Local-2007 and Parliamentarian-2007.
- 9 Source: Özgür 2005, 11.
- 10 Source: Özgür 2005, 12.

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# CAUCASUS JEWS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS: SOCIAL NETWORKS IN A MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

*Chen Bram*<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The small courtyard I visited in summer 2003 in the old part of Derbent, a city in the Autonomous Republic of Dagestan, was at that time shared by 3 families. Their small apartments were located around the common yard, about 20 square meters in size. A common gateway from the backside of the street led to the yard and then to the apartments. I entered the yard with Simandu and Sadiq: Simandu is a Caucasus Jew who used to live in Dagestan but moved to Israel more than 20 years ago, and Sadiq, a Lezgin,<sup>3</sup> was still living there. We sat in one corner of the yard and they shared their memories of the 1970s when they lived there during the Soviet period. Six families of five different nationalities used to live in these apartments (later, each two apartments were connected into one). The two men counted their former neighbors and mentioned their "national"<sup>4</sup> belonging: the Azeri, then, next door, the man who had an Armenian father and a Russian mother, next to him a Dargin, then a Qajar ("they are Azerbaijan, but originally from Iran," Simandu explained) and themselves: the Lezgin and the Jew<sup>5</sup>. While sitting in the yard, they shared their memories dealing with everyday life during that time. It clearly was the base for their friendship and relationships, which survived for many years since Simandu went to Israel. The scene of this multi-ethnic courtyard, as I will show below, reflects relationships that should be understood in a larger context than just mere relations with neighbors and nostalgic memories. The 'common resident' is one important component of the multi-ethnic interaction in the construction of multi-ethnic networks in which Caucasus Jews were important participants.

The Caucasus is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in the world, which presents a unique opportunity to study the situation of Jews in a multi-ethnic society. In this paper I will examine different manifestations of multi-ethnic networks, and their importance to the understanding of Caucasus Jews and their experience in the Caucasus during the last decade. The question of "local identity" is central to this discussion, especially given the background of some trends in Jewish historiography which emphasized that Jewish communities in the diaspora were often considered as "the other" and even as a "foreign" minority.<sup>6</sup> In addition to general questions about the Jewish experience as an historical diaspora group, the study of Jewish experiences in the Caucasus can shed light on the complex relationship between the centrality of Jews in multi-ethnic networks and the political dimensions of their position under Russian imperialism and especially in regard to Soviet ethnic policy, which attempted to reshape ethnic identities.<sup>7</sup>

Utilizing an anthropological methodology, I will analyze different patterns and phases of interaction between Jews within their surroundings in multi-ethnic societies by detailing two examples, which I documented during my fieldwork in the North Caucasus in the summer of 2003.<sup>8</sup> I will then connect these examples to a larger discussion of Caucasus Jews and their recent history: The study of multi-ethnic networks can contribute to the understanding of major events and questions in the history of Jews in this area, as well as to the understanding of the dynamic of Caucasus Jewish relations in multi-ethnic surroundings today. In this sense, this case study emphasizes the importance of a diachronic approach in the study of multifaceted and complex social systems.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, anthropological and historical understandings of multi-ethnic networks are relevant not only to the Caucasus, but also to the study of the experience of Jews and other diaspora minorities in multi-ethnic networks in different places and eras.

## Background: Caucasus Jews in the North Caucasus

The Caucasus is one of the most diversified areas in the world in terms of ethnic groups and languages.<sup>10</sup> According to some scholars, Jews came to the area in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC from Persia, although there are different opinions about the origin of the group and the time of their arrival in the

Caucasus. In addition to Caucasus Jews, Ashkenazi Jews from Russia and Ukraine settled in the Caucasus since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after Russian domination of the area, with even bigger numbers during World War II and after. These Jews are commonly referred to by locals as "*Evropeiskii Evrei*" (European Jews), or "*Urus DJuhud*" (Russian Jews) while Caucasus Jews, in comparison, are perceived as "local" Jews, or "Mountain Jews."<sup>11</sup>

The boundaries and distinctions between these Jewish groups were usually quite sharp, but there was also cooperation between them, such as Caucasus Jewish assistance to Ashkenazi Jewish refugees during the Second World War and their collaboration in Zionist activity since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup>

Caucasus Jews refer to themselves as *Juhuru* (singular: *Juhur*), meaning "Jews", and speak in their own Jewish language: Judeo-Tat, as it is usually called by linguists, or *Juhuri* ("Jewish"), as it usually called by the people of the community<sup>13</sup>. The language and its name are connected to another important issue in recent Caucasus Jewish history: the policy of "Tatization," an attempt by Soviet authorities together with the cooperation of some Caucasus Jewish activists to classify Caucasus Jews as "Tats," i.e., part of a Tat nationality, which also encompasses Muslim and Christian-Armenian Tats, two small minority groups who speaks other Tat languages/dialects.<sup>14</sup>

This policy stressed that "Jewish Tats" are Jews only by religion, and hence have no connection to other Jews or to the Jewish people in general. The policy was based on the cooperation of the Caucasus Jewish elite, and it raises important questions regarding Caucasus Jews, their identity, their identification and their relations with their social and political surroundings. These questions have not yet received proper research attention and they are not the main focus of this article. However, as I will show later, examining the places of Jews in multi-ethnic networks can throw some light on these complicated issues.

Caucasus Jews lived throughout vast areas of the Caucasus, from Azerbaijan in the Southeast to the Russian districts of Stavropol in the West-Central North Caucasus. This situation of communities scattered all over the northern Caucasus meant that Jews had connections with different local people, even more so than other groups, which gave them opportunities in trade, etc. Although Caucasus Jews from various localities had connections, it is hard to refer to them as one "community," Caucasus Jews were a general category, with regional communities who differentiated in dialect (4 major dialects of Judeo-Tat),<sup>15</sup> in customs and in many other areas. In each different location the Jews also adopted a local identity through their influence and connection with other local people, while maintaining a Jewish identity. I saw an example of this occurrence on several visits to Nal'chik during the 1990s. The local Jews, who live among the Kabardinians, stressed their local identity and referred to the Jews of Grozni, for example, and their customs as "Chenen Jews". At the same time both groups could be distinguished from the Jews in Azerbaijan, who were under strong Azeri-Turkic influence, or from the Jews of multi-ethnic Derbent in Dagestan. The importance of local identity is connected also to multilingualism as a key characteristics of Caucasus Jews besides the *lingua franca* of the area (Russian, which replaced Turkish) and their own language (*Juhuri* or Judeo-Tat, which was replaced by Russian during the last decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century), Jews, especially men, spoke or at least understood a few local languages of their neighbors.<sup>16</sup> Beside spoken language they were also familiar with the non-verbal behavioral codes of different groups. Such codes, "*adat*" as it is generally referred to in the Caucasus, are extremely important. Familiarity with different levels of *adat* (of all Caucasians, and of specific people) is one of the markers, which could differentiate a "local" from a "foreigner."<sup>17</sup> This background already points out the important role that multi-ethnic networks played in the life of Caucasus Jews. Still, with such a diverse background, it is hard to refer to the experience of Caucasus Jews in a general context. In the following discussion I will refer especially to two places within the northern Caucasus: Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria. Both are located on the edge of Europe, an area with a strong Russian influence (especially Kabardino-

Balkarya) since the Russian empire conquered the Caucasus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the present day when it is a part of the Russian Federation.

Daghestan, a land of "minorities without majority,"<sup>18</sup> is the homeland of numerous ethnic groups<sup>19</sup>. The biggest groups are Avar, Dargin, and Lezgin. Daghestan was an important historical center of Caucasus Jews. One of the most important Jewish centers was the city of Derbent, located at a strategic point between the shores of the Caspian Sea and the mountains on the route connecting Asia and Europe. About 15,000 Jews lived in Derbent (about 15% of the local population) at the beginning of the 1970s,<sup>20</sup> preceding the 1990s immigration of most Caucasus Jews to Israel.<sup>21</sup> Other important Jewish communities included Makhach-kala, the capital of Daghestan, and Buinaksk (known also as Tamir-Khan-Shura). Jews were also scattered in other towns and villages. The second area is Kabardino-Balkarya (historically known as Kabarda), with Kabardinians (a Circassian subgroup) as the largest ethnicity, as well as Russians, Turkic-speaking Balkars, and other small groups. Jews were concentrated mainly in Nal'chik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkarya. They were among the first inhabitants of this city when it was still a Russian fort in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and then constituted a large community, mostly concentrated in the 'Kolonka' neighborhood. 6,000 to 10,000 Jews lived in Nal'chik in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> Both Daghestan and Kabardino-Balkarya were autonomous republics within the Russian Soviet Republic, and retain the same status in the Russian Federation after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

### **Living Together in a Derbent Courtyard: An Ethnographic Account**

One of the things I wanted to investigate during my fieldwork in Daghestan in 2003 was the pattern of multi-ethnic residence. Many Caucasus Jewish immigrants in Israel told me about this way of living. Derbent, in particular, was a place that they depicted in their stories, describing the old buildings in the old town, where several families of different nationalities lived together around a shared courtyard. I had visited the Caucasus a few times before and had seen different types of multi-ethnic neighborhoods, but had missed this specific pattern of old Derbent. The stories I heard usually referred to this experience when illustrating the important place that Jews used to have in this town. These stories were also full of memories of neighbors, friends and colleagues from other ethnic groups. But, in fact, my desire to see some remains of this in 2003 was already chasing after the shadows of bygone days. After all, by this time the majority of the Derbent Jewish population had moved to Israel or to the Piatigorsk area in the "Russian" Caucasus, to Moscow or to other countries and most of the remaining population, mostly elderly, did not live in those old neighborhoods anymore. I stayed in another area of Socialist block residences with small apartments (where inter-ethnic interactions were not less interesting, but different) and I also visited some other Jews in rich new neighborhoods of the town. The synagogue, however, remained at its original site, close to the center of the old town where the old "Jewish neighborhood" used to be until the authorities demolished it in the 1920s.<sup>23</sup> When visiting the synagogue I met a Caucasus Jewish man who was visiting from Israel: his father, who had been living in a village near Derbent, had just died, and the mourning man came to the funeral more than 20 years after he had left the Caucasus. The man, Simandu,<sup>24</sup> worked as a technician in Israel, and although he very much appeared to be a local when I first saw him at the synagogue (I did not guess that he was an Israeli), once he recognized that I was an Israeli he started to talk with me in Hebrew instead of Russian or Judeo-Tat, which were the languages used by the few, older people in the synagogue. Hearing about my general interest in Caucasus Jews and their local experience in Derbent he invited me to join him and offered to show me how Jews used to live in this area. Meeting him and his brother at the following *Shabbat* morning prayer in the synagogue and walking with them afterwards to the place where they lived turned out to be an unexpected opportunity to go into the past, and to understand patterns of living in this neighborhood, where Jews used to live almost in every courtyard, together with people from numerous other ethnic groups.

Simandu took me to the yard where he used to live before he emigrated to Israel, and where he was now staying with his former neighbor. We met this neighbor, Sadiq, a Lezgin, in the street near the synagogue. I did not have to guess his nationality – Simandu introduced me to him and pointed out that he was a Lezgin. "He comes from Kura, near the Jewish village of Khandzhel-Kala," he explained,<sup>25</sup> "and I sold my former apartment here to him. Now, when I arrived, I came to him. I stay one night with him and one night with my sister-in-law, and I also use his car while staying here." We entered the yard and Simandu's host also became my host for a short time. Simandu originally had come to live here when he was young: he had taken his new family and moved from the village to the town. We sat in one corner of the yard and both, the Jew and the Lezgin, told me about their shared experience of life in this courtyard, of how they used to sit together, in the middle of the common yard playing cards or talking at night after the kids went to sleep. Once, Simandu, quite a big man, fell asleep while his neighbors were waiting for him, so jokingly, they went to his house and carried him out, still sleeping, he told me laughing. Such stories were followed by some comparison between the former Soviet times and the present fragile situation of Daghestan. The neighbors in this yard, although coming from different national groups, shared similar backgrounds and their stories often reflected the process of urbanization in the 1960s and 1970s. Although this situation called for nostalgic memories, it should be understood in relation to local context and local history. This context, as I will show below, demonstrates that these memories were not mere nostalgia or politeness (in response to my presence as the "audience") but reflected cooperation, mutual recognition and friendship as characterizing factors of the relationships among these individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, although this does not exclude the tensions that were also part of these multi-ethnic interactions. This was illustrated by the connection between Simandu and Sadiq, when he came back, the Jewish man did not stay in the village where his father's house was, or in a hotel, or even with his Jewish relatives. Rather, it seemed "natural" for him and his older brother to stay in the apartment of his former neighbor, the Lezgin who had bought his apartment 20 years ago.

### **Multi-Ethnic Relations in Context: The Roots and Meaning of Plurality**

Residence patterns provide one example of how multi-ethnic interactions take part in everyday experience in a way that mark differences, but at the same time also stress the similarities that exist beyond ethnicity. These patterns of residence provide opportunities for economic cooperation, but above all can create personal relationships based on mutual cooperation and responsibility, that is, multi-ethnic networks. From this perspective, the scene of the shared courtyard is only a starting point to understanding the position of Jews in different multi-ethnic networks in other spheres.

This mutual recognition of differences accompanied by cooperation beyond ethnic boundaries was something that had roots well before the creation of such multi-ethnic neighborhoods, reinforced by the multi-ethnic ideology of Soviet times. Taking the residents of this yard as an example shows that although they came from different areas and groups, most of them lived in multi-ethnic communities in their former villages or at least in their regions. Thus, for many of them, local Jews were known to be part of their multi-ethnic society. Simandu, for example, came from the village of Khoshmanzil, near Derbent, where Jews lived beside local groups such as Tabasaran and Azeri.<sup>26</sup> His father returned to this village after going to Israel for two months in 1997. He preferred to go back to his village where he was the last living Jew. After his death only the Jewish cemetery remained. The salient place of Jews as part of local multi-ethnic society was even more significant in Derbent itself, where Jews made up a large and important segment of the population after settling there in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup>

The place of Jews in this multi-ethnic society was influenced by a factor that relates to the meaning of such diversity in general. My description of the local yard stressed a kind of multicultural society where mutual respect of ethnic and cultural identities was based on small-scale interactions.



However, at the same time there were also distinct tensions among these groups.<sup>28</sup> One example is the tension between people of the mountains – such as Avar or Lezgin – and people of the plains – such as Kumiks and Azeri. In some contexts, such tensions were not less important than religious distinctions. Tensions also existed among the largest groups over hegemony, especially between Avar and Kumiks, and between different people over land, especially due to Soviet interventions and the impact of Stalin's deportations (as in the case of Aki-Chechen). Hence, in many cases relations with local Jews were less loaded than relations among other groups.

This complexity shows the importance of understanding the place of Jews in relation to the local "ethnic map." Looking at ethnicity allows a plural context, rather than a more binary model of majority-minority, which concentrates on religious identities; the Caucasus Jewish experience should be understood as an example of Jews in multi-ethnic surrounding and not only by the traditional approach which views Jews, first and foremost, as a religious minority.

Stereotypes and collective images give another hint to the meaning of multi-ethnic framework. In Daghestan, as in other places, one collective image of Jews is that they are smart and/or wise people. But a proverb I heard from both a Jewish community leader and an Avar academician says: "When a Lak is born the Jew cries"<sup>29</sup> (the Laks are a small native group of mountainous Daghestan). "But why does the Jew cry?" I asked. "Because Laks are as smart as Jews," was the answer.<sup>30</sup>

The multi-ethnic context, however, does not necessarily undermine religious differences, and the Caucasus is also a meeting place of religions. Keeping this in mind, it seems that looking at relations with other religious minorities can tell more than the anecdote dealing with Muslim Laks. Such comparison raises the question of whether Caucasus Jews were the group which symbolized "the other," as sometimes happened with Jews in different parts of Europe for certain economic, historical, and/or cultural reasons. Comparison to other groups is interesting here. It seems that Christian Armenians, for example, were closer than Caucasus Jews to the structural position of "middle-man minority,"<sup>31</sup> although they were part of the local society as well. Russian settlers in the area, as part of the colonial presence, played a different role as "the other" in the modern era, Caucasus Jews, however, in many respects were considered to be closer to other "local" mountain people, although it is a question for further research when and where Caucasus Jews also suffered from a different kind of hostility, and even anti-Semitism in some areas (especially in the Trans-Caucasus, less in the northern Caucasus) and what was the place of authorities in this.<sup>32</sup> Generalizations at this stage of the research are problematic, and there is a need for further study of the changes in the positions of Caucasus Jews in different periods and contexts in the modern era. Still, the points raised here do suggest a different framework (than traditional anti-Semitism) to understand the place of Caucasus Jews.

### **An Anthropological Approach: Different Levels and Experiences of Multi-Ethnic Networks**

My basic assumption and argument is that analyzing Jewish identity and Jewish existence is not possible without an understanding of the place that the Jews had in multi-ethnic surroundings. Attention to diversity and multi-ethnic relations demands a theoretical approach which enables the analyses of complex and multi-faceted social fields. An anthropological approach can contribute to historical understanding of such settings on several levels. First, regarding the very basic questions of Jewish existence and continuity, an anthropological approach suggests special attention to the interrelations between two complimentary but in other ways also contradictory levels: Jewish involvement in multi-ethnic networks, and the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and separate identity. Second, the anthropological method brings attention to social and cultural contexts while at the same time combining social analyses with diachronic historical understanding – especially to questions of ethnicity and ethnic relations, which have long been central in anthropology. Third, anthropology allows the opportunity to examine Jewish experiences in multi-ethnic networks in different phases of everyday experience. By this, it enables an analysis which strives to see the

relations between the levels of 'state' and 'society' while giving each of them an independent analytical place, as well as explaining social processes and historical developments. Hence, insight from current anthropological research can contribute to broadening discussions in social history. All of these aspects urge the examination of multi-ethnic networks beyond the traditional discourse of Jewish experience, and to examine new angles of Jewish interactions and relations with their surroundings.

Two basic arenas of Jews' relations with their surroundings are economy and politics. In the Caucasus, as in other areas, both politics and economy are central arenas for the understanding of the Jewish experience. However, concentrating mainly on these arenas can lead to a misunderstanding of the Jewish experience, and might lead to a tendency to look for general patterns which are taken from a broader discussion of the Jewish Diaspora experience,<sup>33</sup> without giving enough attention to the local context. This is problematic in general, but has special importance regarding the study of the Caucasus with its unique multi-ethnic environment. It is also important regarding the situation of Russian colonialism and domination in the area since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which requires a differentiation between everyday relations with the local society and relations with the state (without ignoring their mutual influences).

Ethnographic accounts can contribute to this by giving attention to other aspects of the everyday experience of Jews in multi-ethnic networks, besides political and economic, such as the example of residential patterns and relationships among neighbors. The manifestations of multi-ethnic networks in everyday life, however, as we shall see, are not detached from the discussion of economic and political aspects. Rather, they demonstrate and shed light on them from a different angle revealing their role in everyday experience. The following discussion will add another dimension which is highly connected to the first example, which will connect together symbolic manifestations of multi-ethnic relations and economic exchange.

### The "Kunak" Tradition: Trade, Hospitality and Inter-ethnic Relations

One contribution of an anthropological approach to the study of Jews in multi-ethnic networks is its potential to show the connections between current manifestations of inter-ethnic relations in everyday experience to historical accounts of such interactions.

The above discussion, which connects together my ethnographic experience in 2003 and the memories of inter-ethnic relations in the 1960s and 1970s, is one example of this. At the same time, it seems that this example is not detached from older patterns of inter-ethnic relations and exchange in the Caucasus. Simandu's decision to stay at the house of his previous neighbor is echoing the old Caucasian tradition of the *kunak*, it seems that the Lezgin became a *kunak* for the Jew<sup>34</sup>, and that this relationship has its roots in the cultural, social and economic meanings of this term.

"Kunak" in its simplest interpretation is a friend and an ally whom you trust who lives in another place, village, city or community. This is a concept with practical and symbolic importance regarding the centrality of multi-ethnic networks in the Caucasus, especially in trade and in traveling within this area. The geographical and topographical conditions of the Caucasus, with its high mountains and narrow roads, required networking of different groups involved in trade. Jews had an important role in this network, although they didn't monopolize any position, and only some of them were traders, while others had different occupations, including in crafts and agriculture.<sup>35</sup> Still, traders' networks were important meeting places both on a social and on cultural level. The term and institution of *kunak* (or also *kurdash*) sheds some light on the nature of these networks.

Ilya S. Anisimov, the 19<sup>th</sup> century ethnographer of Caucasus Jews, describes in his 1880s book that, "often, a Mountain Jew will enter into a friendship with a Muslim and, kissing him warmly, will become his 'Kurdash' for life. They exchange weapons and make a holy vow to come to one another's assistance, even at the cost of endangering their own lives."<sup>36</sup> Although it is easy to trace, the fact

that Anisimov describes this institution in a romantic and even Orientalist style for his Russian readers,<sup>37</sup> shows that there is much evidence for the importance of the *kunak* system in Caucasian societies and that Jews took part in it as a local group. Beyond vows and romanticism, the *kunak* system provided a safe refuge and allies when leaving the local village for trade or any other journey: once you entered a *kunak* house you received full hospitality, and this, of course, was a reciprocal situation.<sup>38</sup> These practices are still in use today in the Caucasus, especially when referring to host-guest relations.<sup>39</sup>

The changing role of the *kunak* in local interactions gives an interesting prism through which to view the modern history of Caucasus Jews and their place in multi-ethnic networks. Anisimov and Tsherni's<sup>40</sup> descriptions tell us about Jews as villagers, whom, like other villagers, have *kunaks* in other villages – often people from other ethnic groups. But their writings also reflect the changes in the lives of Caucasus Jews in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when many Caucasus Jews migrated to the cities and towns; some of them new towns which started to develop around Russian forts.<sup>41</sup> Examples of this can be seen in Tamir-Khan-Shura (Boynaks) in Daghestan, and in Nal'chik in Kabarda. In these places, many Jews became "city *kunaks*" for villagers who came to trade in the town bazaar. In Nal'chik, for example, Kabardians who came to the bazaar preferred to stay and to deal with Jews, than with others such as Russians who had settled there as well.<sup>42</sup> Nal'chik was built as a Russian fortress in the mid-nineteen century and Jews were among the first settlers there. Jews were living also in some Kabardinian villages. Following the Russian Conquest and during the long Caucasian war in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Jews found refuge near Russian fortresses (which evolved into cities), but remained connected with local populations. Such connections lasted for years and also reflected the relations between Kabardians and Jews when the former became the majority in Nal'chik. A similar position of Caucasus Jews as city *kunaks* is reflected in stories I gathered from Caucasus Jews who migrated from Derbent to Israel. Of particular relevance are the descriptions of the mutual relationships between Lezgins and Caucasus Jews as told by Caucasus Jews who came to Derbent – they or their parents – from villages where Lezginians were the majority.<sup>43</sup>

These accounts of Jews serving as city *kunaks* relate to a long period, from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1950s and 1960s, when many other groups went through a rapid process of urbanization, as can be seen in the backgrounds of both the Jew and the Lezgin in the example above.

### **Symbolic Gestures: Maintaining Multi-Ethnic Networks, Maintaining Ethnic Boundaries**

During the Soviet era, Caucasus Jews participated in multi-ethnic networks both as part of their life in multi-ethnic neighborhoods as well as part of their involvement in the "grey economy" which was an important part of Soviet life. Multi-ethnic networks were crucially important in this kind of non-formal economic structure. This was accompanied also by interesting manifestations of cultural exchange. One such example of this I saw already in 1990, during a visit to Nal'chik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkar, ASSR. During a Caucasus Jewish marriage ceremony, the father of the groom invited a Kabardian man who was his friend and partner in some grey economy trade. The interesting part is that this was accompanied by the playing of Kabardian music and dancing a typical Kabardian dance in honor of this friend and business partner. The orchestra itself was multi-ethnic and familiar with different styles of music. This was reflected in their playing not only the music of Mountain Jews and Kabardinians but also other types of Caucasian music, as well as Russian and Yiddish music. During my years of studying Caucasus Jews, I have witnessed such "structured" gestures of acknowledging the cultural identity of the "other" on other similar occasions as well.

But such descriptions can easily lead to a romantic perception of inter-ethnic relations in the Caucasus. However, in this specific case the relationship between the Jew and the Kabardian came to a violent end in the middle of the 1990s. The details of this specific case need a separate discussion, and also I cannot say who, in the end, was responsible for this change. It was clear, however, from

what I heard from relatives of this Jewish family with whom I stayed in close contact, that these developments had to do with the changing situation in the area, the economic crisis which affected society, and, in particular, the growing numbers of Jews who had decided to migrate. In other cases, on the other hand, I saw opposite examples, cases where inter-ethnic cooperation continued, and were reshaped even after migration. Still, I refer to this specific case here simply to point out that multi-ethnic networks, even more than other relationships between people and groups, are highly influenced by outside circumstances and are dependent on the situation of its different partners.

The appearance of symbolic gestures as a recognition of other people's identity, which become part of the structure of public events such as wedding ceremonies is especially interesting because it tells us something about the interplay between participating in multi-ethnic networks and maintaining ethnic boundaries.<sup>44</sup> I will use another ethnographic example in order to demonstrate this, this time of a marriage ceremony that took place in 2003 in Pyatigorsk, a city in the "Russian" north-central Caucasus. The bride came from Daghestan, and the groom grew up in Pyatigorsk, where many Caucasus Jews from Daghestan and Chechnya had moved after 1990. I joined the bride's family on their daylong journey from Machakala, Daghestan to Pyatigorsk, where the groom's family lived. Both came from Caucasus Jewish families. During the long drive in the rented bus, I learned that among us were also two guests who were Dargins by nationality, relatives from intermarriage in the previous generation, who came from Boynaks. I understood this after talking to one son of this family (born to a Jewish mother and Dargin father); he had gone to Israel on a youth program and at that time he was serving in the Israeli army but had received special vacation leave for this family marriage. He was quite uncomfortable while talking to me, but once I reassured him that I was quite familiar with the Caucasus he seemed to become more relaxed. In the evening, during the wedding, the presence of his relatives, the Dargins, were acknowledged by a leader of the Machakala Jewish community, who was also a relative of the bride, and came with us to Pyatigorsk. He greeted them in their language in addition to Russian and Juhuri, pointing out the relationship between Dargins and Caucasus Jews, and thanking them for coming and honoring the event. Then he invited the older Dargin man to give his greetings (all with a microphone in front of the guests). Afterwards the wedding band – as in the other case, composed of musicians from different ethnic groups – played music from Daghestan that was familiar to all of the audience. Watching this and remembering the conversation with his son made me think again about such gestures with regard to intermarriages. It seems that such public acknowledgment of cultural and ethnic identity has a double meaning: it gives a place to the guests who belong to other groups while at the same time it is also symbolically marking them. As part of the importance given to the maintenance of ethnic boundaries, such an action pragmatically reminds these guests and their family members that although they are not the first choice for marriage, they are welcome guests. In the case described above, this involved an even more delicate balance: while it seems that the son was considered a part of the group like everybody else, even though his immigration to Israel pointed out the Jewish side of his identity, his relatives still remained outsiders to the group, although close and respected. This seems to indicate a larger phenomenon in the relations of intermarriages.

Once there was inter-ethnic marriage it was understood as part of life, especially during Soviet period. But at the same time, most indigenous ethnic communities tried to avoid intermarriages. In that instance, Jews were not so different from other communities. Take for example, another story I heard, from a Kabardian about a Kabardian boy and a Jewish girl who fell in love. Both families did everything possible to avoid this connection, not because they didn't like the other group, but because it went against the norms of group endogamy. The young couple, however, didn't give up. It took them a few years but in the end they were married and the Kabardian who told me the story said that both families and communities came to the wedding and recognized both traditions in the celebrations. Still, in most cases, it seems that the couple usually will be more identified with one of the communities, although relations with the other side will remain, and in that sense the couple will

serve as axis of another network which can be manifested in economic or even political collaborations.

All of this has to do with Soviet culture and the influence of its "multinational" ideology, but it also has roots in Caucasian cultural practices. The interplay between these influences requires a different discussion. Regarding the current discussion, the most important lesson is examining the importance of the context of a multi-ethnic society that has many "common" arenas of interaction simultaneous to the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. Thus, an interesting dialectic exists between building inter-ethnic relations and using different mechanisms of boundary maintenance.

### **Conclusion I: Multi-Ethnic Networks and the Study of Caucasus Jews**

An important aspect of the Caucasus Jewish experience in this diverse area was their situation as "one group among many." As such, Caucasus Jews saw themselves, and in most cases were also perceived by others, as being "local." This position changed over time and place, but generally speaking, it seems that in this respect the situation of Caucasus Jews was different from that of Russians and from Russian Jews who settled in the area. For this latter population the question of "locality" was more ambiguous. Caucasus Jews, at least in most of the years of the Russian and Soviet eras, were part of "local" multi-ethnic-networks. In both trade and in culture Caucasus Jews played an important role in the constitution of these networks, a subject that requires additional research.<sup>45</sup> But it is the example of housing and patterns of residence that gives salient manifestation of the placement of Caucasus Jews, as one more group, among others, which shared multi-ethnic everyday experiences and constituted multi-ethnic networks.<sup>46</sup>

A common approach in the historiography of Jews differentiates between Jews in Christian surroundings and Jews in Muslim surroundings. The case of Caucasus Jews shows the limitations of such simplistic differentiation. Although the religion of the surrounding people is an important factor in the Caucasus, ethnic differentiations and boundaries in this area are also highly important, and stand as an important set of variables (which include factors as language, group identity and symbols, etc.) in its own right. In this sense, the situation of Caucasus Jews should be understood and analyzed within the context of Jews in a multi-ethnic surrounding, and such a perspective goes beyond the common distinction that places Caucasus Jews as "Jews among Muslims." At the same time, at certain historical moments the framework of "Jews in Muslim surroundings" becomes more appropriate, for example, when resistance to Russian expansion took a religious form, as religion was also a tool to unite the heterogeneous population against a foreign invader.

Russian imperialism and then Soviet Russian control of the area added additional crucial contexts to understanding Jews in the Caucasus during the modern period. This led to another aspect of Caucasus Jews' recent history: the politics of Tatzation. It seems that this policy should be understood as a product of Russian, and then Soviet, political manipulations, which used a radical reinterpretation of the multi-ethnic framework in the construction of collective identities (i.e., seeing the Jews as another local ethnic group and not having any connections to other Jews). This raises questions that are beyond the scope of this discussion. Still, the analytical differentiations made above between the situation of Jews regarding the state and their place in everyday multi-ethnic networks show the limits of Tatzation – although Soviet authorities and some segments of the Caucasus Jews elite made strong efforts to identify Caucasus Jews as Tats, in everyday social interactions, both Jews themselves and their neighbors kept their former designation. Both saw their distinctiveness, but also knew about their connection to other Jews. Looking at the dynamics of multi-ethnic networks reveals the gap between the salient impact of the "Tati policy" in the political arena and the limited influence in the social sphere of everyday life where Jews remained Jews or Mountain Jews for their neighbors, and didn't become Tats. This is also related to the question of the relationships between Caucasus Jews and European/Russian Jews, although there were tensions between the groups, there were important connections as well. It seems that these connections also

gave Caucasus Jews accessibility to other networks, besides those that are the focus of this discussion, but this hypothesis needs further research.<sup>47</sup> Another important issue, which is connected to questions of identification on one hand and the meaning of multi-ethnic networks on the other hand, is the case of the survival of Nal'chik Jews during Nazi occupation. Historical descriptions of this period give an important account of German decisions not to kill the city Jews, which was motivated by their wish to gain the cooperation of the local population, and their fear that applying their regular death policy towards the Jews will harm such cooperation and this had more of an influence than any claims that they were Tats and not Jews.<sup>48</sup> This study, as well as other evidence from this period that were recently collected,<sup>49</sup> hint at the importance of interethnic relationships between Jews and their local neighbors in preventing a tragedy but calls for further research regarding the role of multi-ethnic networks in this little known story of Jewish survival during the Holocaust.

Returning to Russian rule in the Soviet era, it is clear that religious differences were an important factor in the authorities' stance towards Caucasus Jews, especially in their attempts to eliminate their connection to other Jews. But in order to understand their everyday experiences and interactions with other groups, the multi-ethnic framework is very important. This calls for further research that will examine the interplay between multi-ethnic and religious contexts, in different periods and places. It also calls for the examination of the interplay between the level of interaction with the surrounding society and the interaction with the authorities, which in the modern era was represented by Russian control over the Caucasus. The study of multi-ethnic networks can contribute significantly to the examination of all these aspects of the Caucasus Jewish experience while acknowledging the importance of local context and local history.<sup>50</sup>

The study of multi-ethnic networks can contribute fruitful perspectives to the study of Jews (and other ethnic groups) in other places as well. The following section offers different levels or dimensions of discussion and analysis of multi-ethnic networks as a first step towards a combining of anthropological and historical approaches in the study of the interactions of Jews, as well as other "diaspora minorities," with their surroundings in different periods and contexts.

### **Conclusion II: Multi-Ethnic Networks in Everyday Experience- 3 levels of Discussion**

Using ethnographic observations, this chapter suggested several different levels for understanding multi-ethnic networks and the position of Jews (or other minorities) in such networks. Multi-ethnic networks have practical and even instrumental aspects; they also serve social functions and promote cultural exchange and symbolic reinforcement. In understanding these levels, attention should be paid to the social and cultural dialectic between the construction of interethnic relations and the maintenance of ethnic boundaries.

First, multi-ethnic networks have an important instrumental and pragmatic side, which enable trade, mutual economic activity and exchange, as well as in the political field. The "practical" side of such networks is demonstrated when individuals use multi-ethnic networks during travel, work or negotiations with authorities. The practical dimension of constituting multi-ethnic networks also can be seen on the community level when facing a potential crisis, such as in the extreme case of the survival of Nal'chik Jews during Nazi occupation.

Second, such examples of using multi-ethnic networks as a source of support beyond their original instrumental aspects, such as in the case of the mourning man who received help and support when he came back to the Caucasus, shows that the construction of social relations that have deeper personal significance are no less important. Networks, of course, are different from one another in their history and manner of creation, but in any case it is important to look at their manifestations in everyday life, and not only on their economic or political functions.

Third, the close examination of everyday manifestations of multi-ethnic networks also shows the importance of expressing symbolic aspects that can be interwoven and immersed in cultural terms (such as in the example of the term *kunak*, which also shows how the "cultural" and the "economic/practical" are interwoven) and in dynamic historical memories.

Lastly, there is an important dialectic between participation in multi-ethnic networks and efforts to maintain ethnic boundaries. Moreover, it seems that multi-ethnic networks can be an important option for ethnic groups only if participation in such networks does not pose a risk to the very existence of the group's collective identity. Maintenance of ethnic boundaries and group identity during interaction with others who take part in multi-ethnic networks can be understood only in the context of the background of general patterns of ethnic boundaries and ethnic relations in each area. This highlights the importance of context to any analysis of identity.

Hence, while in the Caucasus such involvement was a way of life common to other groups in the region as well, it is a question for comparative research to see to what extent this pattern characterized Jews in other areas and periods, and when, on the other side of the scale, involvement in multi-ethnic networks can be an indicator of change, and/or a threat to group boundaries. Similar questions can be asked about other diaspora minorities.

Such discussion also requires some separation between the social and the cultural levels, or more precisely, between the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and dynamics of cultural change and exchange. In many cases, the continuing interactions in such networks can be part of "boundary work."<sup>51</sup> At the same time, this does not imply that there are no cultural influences: participation in multi-ethnic interactions can influence continuing social and cultural change as well as developments within already existing boundaries.

Questions of group boundaries and identity also remind us that it is possible to differentiate between the positions of some individuals in multi-ethnic networks, and the analysis of the place that such networks have for a group. Caucasus Jews, in this instance, are an example of a group whose participation in multi-ethnic networks significantly influences its way of life. Such groups, I believe, also have highly developed intercultural abilities, and in some cases even multicultural creativity and capacity.<sup>52</sup> This raises other questions, regarding not only this small group but also regarding the history, anthropology and sociology of Jews as well as other diasporic peoples in general. First, however unique the Caucasus is, some of the experiential levels of multi-ethnic networks call for re-examining and comparing Jewish involvement in such networks in other multi-ethnic settings. Second, a different question is what happens to such patterns in cases of immigration, and especially when the social environment becomes one where co-ethnics of different backgrounds become the majority. In this sense, it seems that historical discussions of multi-ethnic networks might have some relevance on current dilemmas regarding recognition of the identity of the "other" and of inter-ethnic interactions in multi-ethnic societies.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Harvey E. Goldberg for his support and Igor Semenov, Vivienne Burstein and Alice Horner for their help and comments. During my fieldwork in the Caucasus, I enjoyed and am grateful for the hospitality and assistance of many people who were very helpful and hospitable although space does not permit me to enumerate all their names here.

<sup>2</sup> Truman Institute, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

<sup>3</sup> Lezgins are a local Muslim group, concentrated especially in Southern Daghestan and Northern Azerbaijan. Their language belongs to the Caucasian group. For details about the different ethnic groups mentioned, see Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire. A Guide*, London: C. Hurst, 1985;

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Helen Krag and Lars Funch, *The North Caucasus: Minorities at a Crossroads*, London: International Minority Rights Group, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> "National" here refer to the Soviet use of this term (*nazioalnost*). See Yuri Slezkine, 1994, The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism. *Slavic Review*, 53:2, 414-452.

<sup>5</sup> This list represents only a small example of the ethnic diversity of Daghestan. It also represents religious diversity: besides Sunni Muslims (the majority in Daghestan, represented here by the Dargin), it includes Christians (here Armenian Orthodox by father, Russian Orthodox by mother), Shiite (most of the Azeris, or 'Azerbaijan' as Simandu refer to them, are formally Shiite Muslims) and Jews.

<sup>6</sup> Such trends were highly connected to the development of Zionist national ideology.

<sup>7</sup> See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations. Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> This fieldwork was part of a longer anthropological project, conducted in Israel among immigrants from the Caucasus, and also included several visits to the Caucasus and to other communities of Caucasian Jews, such as in Moscow and New York.

<sup>9</sup> Harvey E. Goldberg and Hagar Salomon, From Laboratory to Field: Notes on Studying Diversity in Israeli Society. *Hagar*, 3:1 (2002), 123-137; Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney Historization of the Culture Concept, *History and Anthropology*, 12:3 (2001): 213-254.

<sup>10</sup> S. Arutyunov, Minority without Majority: Caucasian Ethnic Mosaic, *Russia and the Moslem World*, N7 (73). 1997 [Rasy I narody, No. 24, pp.175- 179]; Moshe Gammer, Unity, Diversity and Conflict in the Northern Caucasus, in: Yaacov (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia, Conflicting Legacies*. London: Frank Cass, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> *Gorski Evrei* in Russian, *Dag' Juhur* in some local languages. It should be noted that this is a general term relating to the mountainous character of the area but it also contains also Russian colonial overtones. Actually, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of the Jews lived in towns in the plains and near the Caspian Sea, not in the mountains.

<sup>12</sup> Mordechai Altshuler, *The Jews of the Eastern Caucasus, The History of the "Mountain Jews" from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, Ben Zvi Institute and the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1990, pp. 486-506.

<sup>13</sup> Other self-designations are *Pharsi* and simply *Zuhun Imu* [our language]. On this language, see Michael Zand, "Evrejsko-tatskij jazyk" [Judeo-Tat Language] in *Kratkaya Evrejskaja Enciklopedija*, Vol. 2, Yitzchak Oren and Michael Zand, eds. Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 459-462; and Vsevlod Miller, *Materiali dlya izucheniya evereisko-tatskovo yazika* [Materials for the Study of the Judeo-Tat Language], Cenk-Peterburg 1892.

<sup>14</sup> The biggest group among those are the Muslim Tats, most of who live in Azerbaijan. There are a few small villages of Muslim Tats in Daghestan, but there are no Tats in other parts of North Caucasus such as Kabarda. At the same period when the policy of Tatization were implemented, especially in Daghestan, Muslim Tats (in Azerbaijan and the tiny group in Daghestan) went through a process of Turkification and tended to identify themselves as Azeris. While the group itself had interests in separating themselves from the problematic statutes for Jews under Tsarist and Soviet regimes, it seems that the wide implementation of this policy represented the authorities' aims to weaken Caucasus Jews' connections with other Jews, and to avoid Zionist influence on them. See Altshuler, *The Jews of the Eastern Caucasus*, 129-131, 527. For different views on this issue see also Michael Zand, Notes on the Culture of the Non Ashkenazi Jewish Communities Under Soviet Rule, *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 16 (1) 1986, 379-442 and Michael A. Chelnov, "Oriental Jewish Groups in the Former Soviet Union: Modern Trends of Development." The Twenty first Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies, Department of Jewish Studies, University of Cincinnati, 1998; Igor Semenov, The Mountain Jews in the Caucasus: Certain Aspects of Ethnic Identification, *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3 (21) 2003, 165-173;ss and Evgenija Nazarova, Certain Aspects in the Tat Ethnic Myth: On the Terminological Situation of the Mountain Jews Language, paper presented at the 2002 international conference *The Mountain Jews- from the Caucasus to Israel*, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, 8-10.10.2002.

<sup>15</sup> Zand, *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>16</sup> Zand, *Ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>17</sup> For *adat* and other local attributes of Caucasian Jews, see also Tsherni Yosef Yehuda ben Yaakov Halevy, *Sefer Hamasoot beretz Kavkaz ubmdinot meeever leKavkaz uktzat mdinot aherot bnegev Russia mishnat Hatarka'z lishnat Hatarlal'ah* [Book of Journeys in the Land of Caucasus and in Lands beyond the Caucasus and in Some Other Lands in Southern Russia], St. Petersburg 1884, pp. 12-14.

<sup>18</sup> S. Arutyunov, *Op. cit.*



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<sup>19</sup> For a recent account on Daghestan after 1990 see Robert Chenciner, *Daghestan: Tradition and Survival*, London and New York: Curzon, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, p. 225. 1500-2000 Jews remained there in 2003 out of about 800,000 people (some estimate up to 100,000) in the city. The figures I heard during my visit from different community activists ranged from 8000 to 9000, "official numbers" was the term used, to 1500 to 2000 given as the "practical numbers," with the term used by the same activists.

<sup>21</sup> On Caucasus Jewish immigration to Israel see Chen Bram, *Mikavkaz Le Israel- Aliyat Yehudei Hahar* [From the Caucasus to Israel: The Immigration of the Mountain Jews – An Anthropological Perspective on the Communities in the Caucasus and Issues in Their Integration into Israel"], Jerusalem: JDC-Brookdale Institute, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, p. 232. Nal'chik was inhabited by about 250,000 people in the 1990s. Jews were the majority in this area, but beside them lived people from other groups: Ossets, Kabardinians, Balkars, Volga Germans and others. The interviews taken by Svetlana Danilova stress the co-existence of Jews and other people in Nal'chik (collected by Danilova for the Spielberg Project, personal communication).

<sup>23</sup> Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 222-224.

<sup>24</sup> This is a local pronunciation of the Hebrew "Siman-Tov."

<sup>25</sup> The village was also called Khandzhankala or Khendzhele-Kele. On Jews in this village see Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>26</sup> On Jews in this village, see Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 182-183.

<sup>27</sup> On Derbent Jewry, see Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 213-225. Jews probably also lived in Derbent in earlier periods and even in ancient times. The Talmud Yrushalmi, Megilah 4-5 mentions "Rabbi Shimon of Terkent" – which is probably Derbent. See Moshe Yusephov, *Hayehodim Haharariyim beKavkaz ublIsrael* [The Mountain Jews in the Caucasus and in Israel], Jerusalem: Printiv Press, 1991.

<sup>28</sup> For current discussion of these tensions see Moshe Gammer, *Walking the Tightrope between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The case of Daghestan*, *Central Asian Survey*, 21(2) 2002, 133-142.

<sup>29</sup> "Kogda lakets rodilsia – evrei zaplakal." I was told by Igor Semenov that there is a version of a similar Russian proverb that refers to Tatars who have the image (among Russians) of being shrewd people. Probably other similar proverbs can be found in other languages and contexts. What is interesting here is the way the basic idea of the proverb is situated in regard to the multiplicity of groups in Daghestan.

<sup>30</sup> Or "Because Laks are even smarter than Jews" in the Avar academician's variant. I understand this proverb, in both contexts I heard it, as an example for a complex multi-ethnic system. Still, it is a question whether this proverb signals an exclusionary view (and even sounds like straight anti-Semitic humor, as one of my colloques remarked) or as a humorous, but inclusive proverb, as I understand it.

See also William Hugh Jansen, 1959. The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore. *Fabula: Journal of Folklore Studies* 2:205-11.

<sup>31</sup> Edna Bonachich, A Theory of Middleman Minorities. *American Sociological Review* 38, 1973, 583-594.

<sup>32</sup> See the informative discussion on "the surrounding population and the Jews" in Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 132-146. A discussion of the different approaches that this monumental work (and other writers), offers see Chen Bram, *Ethnic Categorization and Cultural Diversity: "A view from the margins": Caucasus Jews between Europe and Asia*. Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008, pp. 12-128. For an analysis of hostility against the members of Jewish agricultural cooperatives in the Derbent region, see discussed by Sonia Razilov, "Taasoka Haklait shel Yehudei Daghestan bein Milhamot Haolam" [Agriculture Employment among Daghestan Jews between the World Wars], research paper, Hamahon Leyahadot Zmanino, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 62-66. Without ignoring the anti-Jewish sentiments that these events manifested, the author does not mention that such hostility also occurred towards other groups who were re-settled by the Soviets by locals who saw it as an invasion of their lands.

<sup>33</sup> Such patterns can include, for example, the place Jews had in multi-ethnic trade routes, which take into account examples from North Africa, Europe or Central Asia. This is true, to some extent, also for Caucasian Jews – but this describes only one aspect of their experience, which did not characterized the majority of this population (see for example the description of Caucasian Jews' occupations in the late 19th century in Ilia Sh Anisimov, *Kavkazkie Evrei – Gortzi* [Caucasian Jews of the Mountains], Moskva Nauka 2002 [1888], pp. 36-38. These limitations are relevant for other cases as well. Another example is the focus that some approaches give to Jews' structural position in the role of economic mediators, or "middle-man minorities" between rulers (often foreigners themselves) and local populations (Bonachich, *Op. cit.*).

<sup>34</sup> Although this is quite a free use of this term, and I'm not sure to what extent the people involved would use it (although I heard other people use it in current context), it also signals a possible modern interpretation of a flexible and time-honored custom

<sup>35</sup> Anisimov, *Ibid*; Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 236-275.

<sup>36</sup> Anisimov, Ilia Sh, *Kavkazkie Evrei – Gortzi* 29. Tsherni gives a similar description, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> For discussion of Anisimov and Orientalism see Mordecai Altshuler, "Eliyaho Anisimov, Hoker edat Hayhodim Haharariim" [Eliyaho Anisimov - Researcher of the Mountain Jewish Community], *Sefanut, Sidra Hadasha, Sefer Rishon*, 1980, pp. 287-310, and Sascha L. Goluboff, 2004, *Are they Jews or Asians? A Tale about Mountain Jewish Ethnography*, *Slavic Review* 63, 1 13-140, and Chen Bram, *Op. cit.* pp. 108-113.

<sup>38</sup> Although these relations are not necessarily symmetrical, and sometimes it's mainly one side which use the other side's house while the reciprocal option remains hypothetical.

<sup>39</sup> I experienced it while going to the mountains with local people during my 2003 Daghestan journey.

<sup>40</sup> Tsherni, *Op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> Altshuler, *The Jews of the Eastern Caucasus*, 59.

<sup>42</sup> This information is based on different conversations with Jews from Nal'chik.

<sup>43</sup> One of the stories, which deals with the village of Akhti, also reflects complicated relations: together with accounts of inter-ethnic cooperation, this anecdote claims that the last Jews left this village, probably in the 1960s, after a tragic bus accident. According to this story, the driver was a Jew, and anger towards the Jews in the village followed this incident. These accounts, however, need a separate discussion which will also address issues surrounding orally transmitted memories as historical sources.

<sup>44</sup> I do not claim that every marriage ceremony of Caucasian Jews contains these patterns, but I saw enough examples to recognize the importance of understanding it.

<sup>45</sup> For some aspects of the role of Caucasus Jews in music and the importance of their interactions with other groups in this sphere, see Piris Eliyahu, *The Music of the Mountain Jews*, Jerusalem: The Jewish Musical Research Center, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1999.

<sup>46</sup> At the same time, this example points out the differences regarding this aspect between different communities of Caucasian Jews, for example, in Kuba, Azerbaijan, Caucasian Jews had their own area. This influences the nature of relations with the surrounding population, although in Kuba as well Caucasian Jews were involved in multi-ethnic networks.

<sup>47</sup> Some examples seems to be "Jewish networks" as manifested both in Zionist activities (see Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 486-507) or in the religious sphere (for example, some Caucasian Jewish rabbis were educated in yeshivas in Lita in the 19th century, or in Moscow in recent years) as well as connections to "Russian networks" with reference to the place some Russian Jews had in the academy, government, etc.

<sup>48</sup> Altshuler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 122-126.

<sup>49</sup> Collected by Svetlana Aharonova Danilova for the Spielberg Project (personal communication).

<sup>50</sup> In this sense, the limitations of the current discussion should be noted as well: while manifesting certain elements of multi-ethnic networks, the attention to the differences between local contexts in the areas mentioned was limited. This is illustrated by the significant difference between the Islamic backgrounds of Daghestan peoples (Avar, Lezgin, etc.) and the Kabardinians and other groups in the Northwest Caucasus who converted to Islam much later.

<sup>51</sup> Fredrick Barth, Introduction, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969.

<sup>52</sup> I am using this term here in its contemporary normative connotations (in anthropological terms, the ethnographic present). This has implications for the discussion of Caucasian Jews since the majority of this group emigrated to Israel in the 1990s.

# QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE REPUBLIC OF ADYGEYA

## *Cemre Erciyes<sup>1</sup>*

### Introduction

This chapter examines how people in the Republic of Adygeya perceive their living conditions according to the results of a quality of life questionnaire. The analysis exemplifies the current socio-economic problems of post-Soviet states using the case of Adygeya. The paper is organized under four headings. The first includes an introduction to some basic concepts as well as general information about the method, the case of Adygeya, and the respondents of the survey. The second section is the evaluation of the Residence by the respondents, including five variables that relate to the assessment of housing, including the dwelling, the neighbors, adequacy of public security, environmental conditions (cleanliness, recreation areas, etc.) and social life. The third part presents the respondents' evaluation of the Systems of Education and Health. The last section is an analysis of the Necessities and Ownership of Goods, which also considers life opportunities.

Many factors in life affect the general standard of living of ordinary people. These include *what one already has* – education, occupation, disabilities, family, etc; *what one possesses* – house, household items, personal connections, job, etc.; *what a residence could add to one's life* – neighbors, environment, recreation facilities, social life, etc.; and *what a state could provide a citizen* – education, health care, freedom, social and political rights, opportunities in life, equality, etc. Objective conditions are thus important determinants of people's well being along with their self-assessments of their own lives, i.e., "subjective well being."

In this research, the Euromodule questionnaire – a survey instrument originally prepared by 15 European researchers to assess social indicators for Europe – was administered after being modified to account for unique conditions prevailing in Adygeya. The fieldwork in Adygeya took place between September and December 2005 in the seven districts (Russian: *rayons*) and two cities of the Republic. The Republic of Adygeya is located in the northwest Caucasus in the historical lands of the Adyge, as they are known in Russia; they are called Circassians in the West and Cherkes in Turkey. Adygeya is one of the 21 Federative Republics of the Russian Federation. It occupies an area of 7790 km<sup>2</sup> within Krasnodar Krai in Southern Russia.<sup>2</sup>

This Republic was chosen as a post-Soviet case study mainly because of its economic status. Adygeya is considered to be one of the poorest areas of the Russian Federation. Although surrounded by highly developed Krasnodar Krai, overall development is very slow in the Republic. The economy of the Republic is mostly based on public and state services. Foodstuffs, timber, woodworking, pulp and paper are the most important light industries. In terms of agriculture grains (primarily corn and wheat), sunflowers, tea and tobacco are the most important products. Crimean roses and lavender are also raised.<sup>3</sup>

The period of 1991-1997 was marked by the economic decline and decrease in life standards of the majority of the population. There were some positive trends in economic development after 1998. The year 2000 was marked by a growth in industrial and agricultural production, an increase in investments, decreases in inflation, number of unemployed workers and people with incomes lower than the poverty line and an expansion of consumer demand domestically. Beginning from February 2000, the real income of the population started to increase, which was the result of the increase in salaries.<sup>4</sup>

Having given a general overview of the socio-economic situation in the Republic of Adygeya, the next sub-section summarizes some basic information about the respondents.

## **The Respondents**

Among the 532 respondents of the survey, 53% live in urban areas and 392 are female (74.5%). Most of the respondents are between 30 to 49 years of age (45.8%). One third of the respondents are younger than 29 years.

Although the Adyge make up 23% of the total population of the Republic, Adyge respondents make up approximately one half of the sample (44.7%); whereas Russian respondents make up a slightly larger 48.5% of the total. Other less represented ethnicities include closely related Caucasian groups such as Abkhazians, Ossets and Lezgis. Furthermore, ex-Soviet ethnicities like Armenian, Kazaks, Moldavians, Ukrainians, and Tatars are present, and there are even German, Greek and Korean respondents.

70% of the survey respondents have lived in the Republic of Adygeya all of their lives. Still, nearly one third of the respondents have lived in another country or region at some point in their lives. More than half of the respondents of the survey are married. A quarter of the respondents are single whereas about one tenth are divorced or living separately. Only 14 women have verified that they are living with someone (that is, without legal sanction of the union). The average household size of the sample is 3.81 people. The average number of people working in a household is 1.85, of these, 0.15 are working abroad.

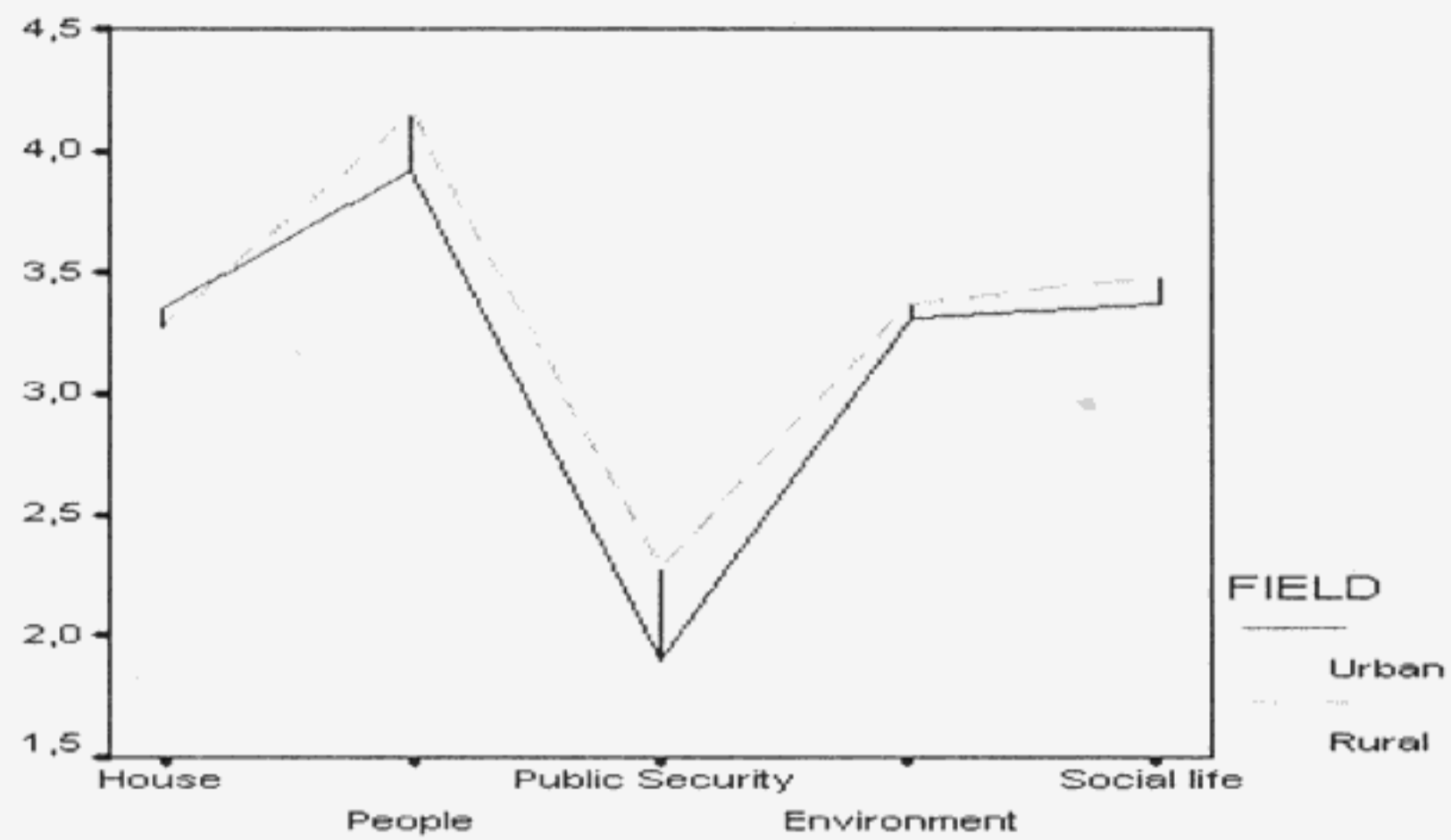
56.2% of the respondents have reported that they live in detached houses and 30.8% have said they live in flats belonging to themselves or their family. Only 22 people lived in rented houses or flats and 7% have said they live in houses of their relatives or acquaintances. Only 8 respondents live in hostels and state or municipal service houses.

The annual median household income of the sample is 7000 Russian rubles (250 US \$). In urban and rural areas the median incomes are 8000 rubles (about 286 US \$) and 7000 rubles respectively. Although the average income is 8452 rubles, income is not distributed homogenously. The standard deviation of income for the entire Republic is 5338 rubles. This variance means that majority of the respondents have incomes ranging between 3114 rubles to 13,790 rubles. This is mainly due to the non-existence of a middle class. Elderly respondents, Russians, widows and divorced respondents, smaller households and people who do not have any agricultural land are more likely to have lower incomes.

Knowing more about our respondents, the next section will deal with the self-assessment of the respondents of their residential conditions.

## **Residence**

Housing as an important indicator of quality of life is captured in this study with concepts that are measured by five variables. These variables relate to the residence itself, neighbors living in surrounding areas, adequacy of public security, environmental conditions (cleanliness, recreation areas, etc.), and social life. The analysis conducted on these five issues indicated that people living in Adygeya are most satisfied with the people around them. Housing satisfaction and environmental satisfaction seem to be closely related. Satisfaction from social life is around average. The lowest satisfaction rate encountered relates to the degree of public security in all of the districts, both rural and urban.



**Figure 1** Mean Satisfaction from Five Different Fields Related to the Residence

Satisfaction from the residence is slightly lower in urban areas except the category ‘satisfaction from the house.’ This is mainly due to the different accommodation possibilities as well as the varying infrastructures and chances to make renovations in the dwellings. In Adygeya, in the district centers and cities, the main type of residence is apartment blocks. Most of these apartment blocks were designed to house as many people as possible. Most of them are run down, dirty, smelly and unsafe. However, they have the necessary infrastructures of sanitation, hot water, heating, gas and telecommunications. The houses, which are located in city centers, suburbs and villages, are mostly old and the conditions may be very poor if not renovated. It is worth noting that most of the newly built houses, many of which are like castles, have all the luxuries. Still, most people cannot make renovations in their residences due to the transitional economy. In the rural areas, this is felt much more deeply since the household incomes are lower.

The Caucasus is known for its pleasant, verdure natural setting. In addition, as part of the Soviet micro district, all of the residential areas have their own parks, well-stocked shops, and health clinics; most also have Culture Halls (Russian: *Dom Kultura*). The biggest environmental problem in Adygeya is said to be the air pollution; however, about 40% of the respondents do not identify it as an issue. Distance to green areas is perceived as a problem in the two cities while distance to entertainment venues, markets and certainly the city center are considered more problematic in other areas, especially in rural settings.

Public security is believed to be a big problem and it is related both to personal experiences and the generally insecure atmosphere of the Caucasus. In total, 87 respondents have been victims of 105 criminal incidents. About half of these occurred in Maikop, the capital city. Most crimes were thefts in the home followed by harassments or threats.

When criminal incidents increase, it is expected that peoples’ trust in each other will decrease. However, people in the Republic of Adygeya seem to have a high level of satisfaction with each other. Looking at the ‘relations with the neighbors’ category shows that about 60% of the respondents frequently meet their neighbors and/or have close relationships. However, most of the Cultural Halls built during Soviet times are no longer in operation today, especially those outside the cities or district centers. This has had a negative impact on the ‘satisfaction from the social life’ category.

### **The Failure of Key Systems: Education and Health**

This section deals with the evaluation of education and health systems by the respondents. After widespread corruption and its accompanying malaise permeated the USSR’s social systems, many of

these systems started to malfunction. In some ex-Soviet polities they did not function at all. The education and health systems, two of the crucial elements that define the main course of people's life, were examined. The respondents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with the education and health systems in terms of their current status. Furthermore, respondents 40 years of age and older were asked to evaluate the contemporary education and health systems in comparison with the Soviet era.

First, the distribution of the highest level of education achieved by the respondents will be discussed in order to contextualize their assessments. The education levels of the respondents have been broken down into four categories. The male-female distribution of these categories shows an interesting picture. A majority of female respondents are university graduates compared to only half of the male respondents. The percentage of males who finished technical middle schools as well as those who have not completed university education is higher than that of females in the same categories.

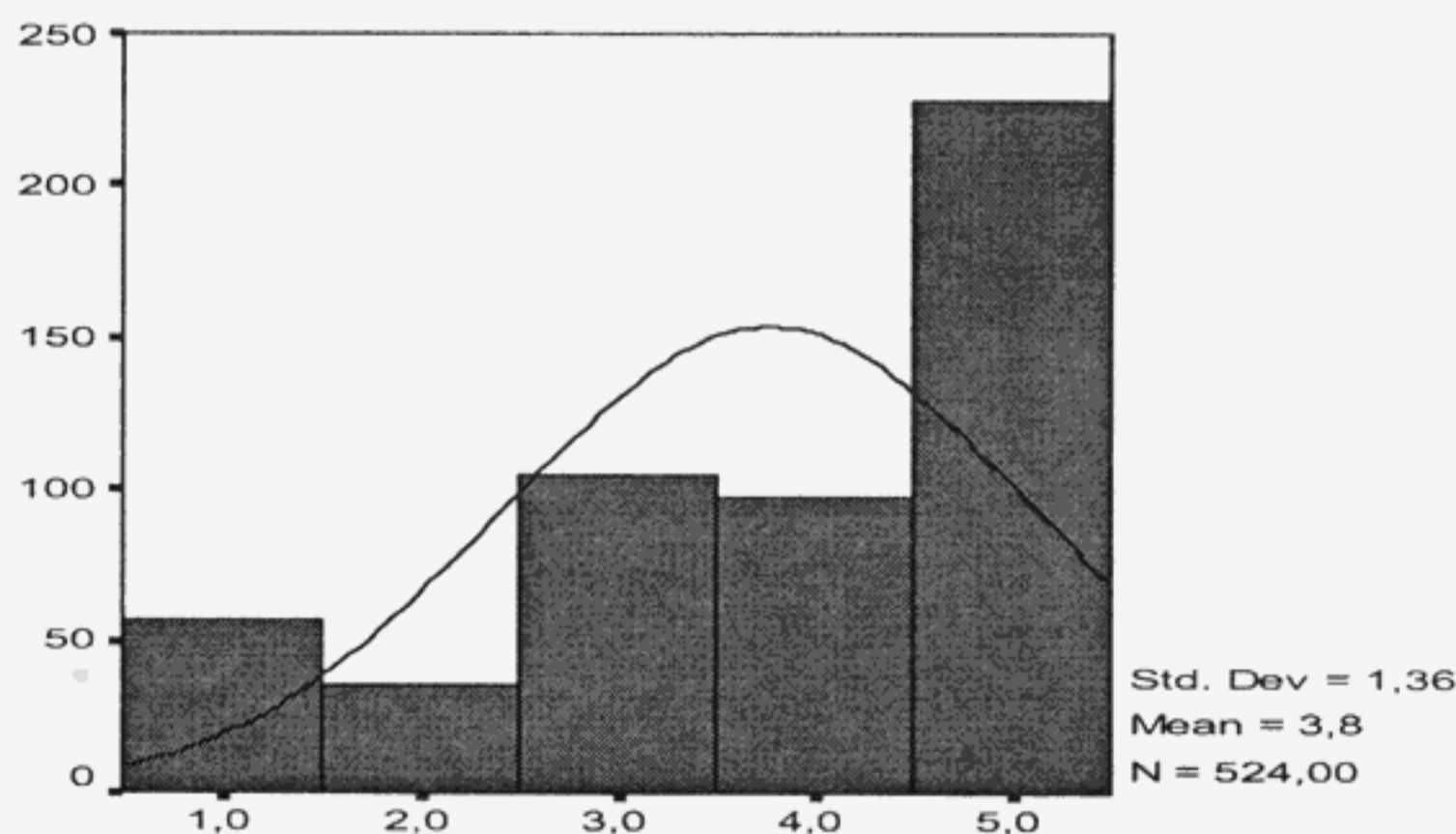
**Table 1** Level of Education Attained by Gender

	Male	Female	Total
<b>School (1-11 years of education)</b>	11.4%	8.6%	9.3%
<b>Technical school</b>	17.6%	15.6%	16.1%
<b>Not completed university</b>	21.4%	11.9%	14.3%
<b>University and higher</b>	49.6%	63.9%	60.3%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

One fifth of the respondents between 30 and 50 years of age are technical middle school (vocational school) graduates. Three fifths of the respondents over 50 and a little more of those over 30 are university graduates. Among the youth, 45.3% are university graduates while nearly the same proportion has not yet completed university programs.

Adyge are more likely to have finished higher education than are Russians and other ethnicities in the Republic. A tenth of Adyge have not completed university while more Russians and even more of other ethnicities have not. One fifth of the respondents who belong to other ethnicities are graduates of technical middle schools, which is relatively more than both ethnic Russians and Adyge.

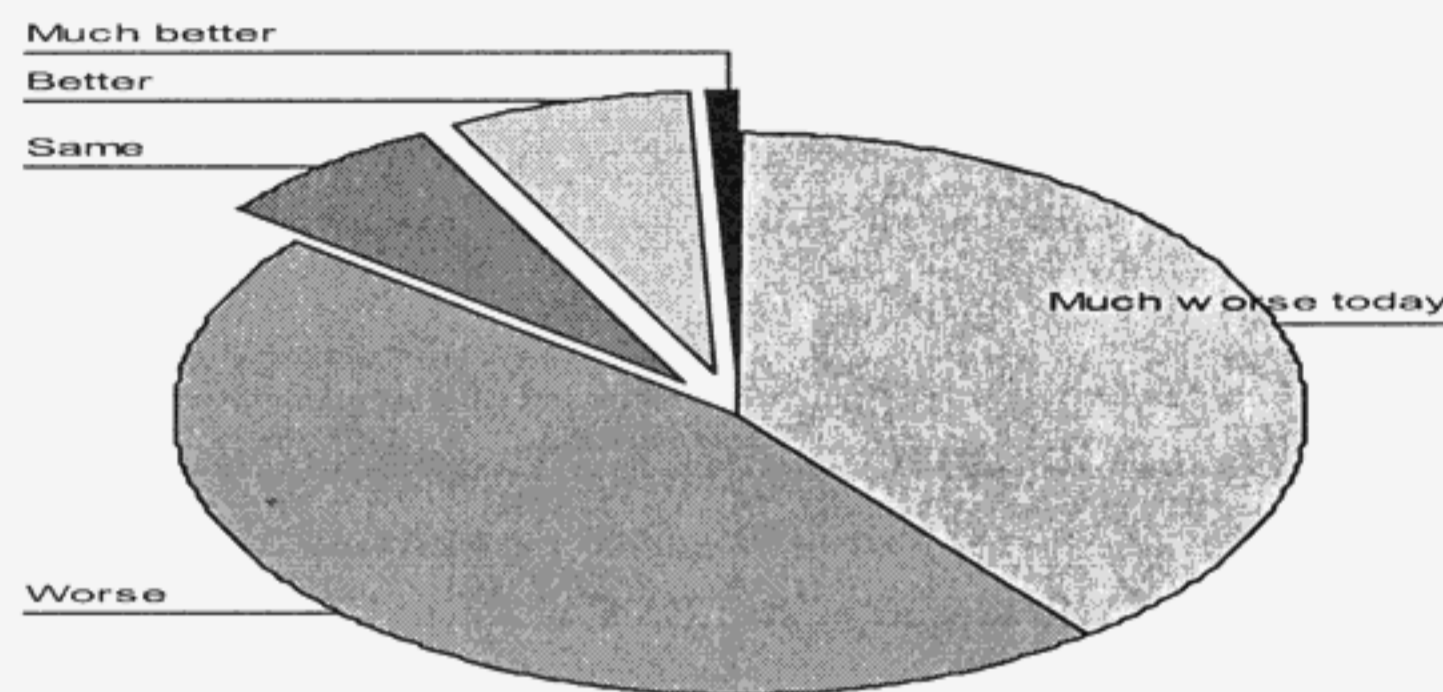
When they evaluated their education, 10.9% of the respondents stated they are not satisfied with their education at all. Still the average satisfaction score is 3.8 and the majority of the respondents, 43.5, are really satisfied with their education.



**Figure 2** Satisfaction with One's Education (1- not satisfied at all, 5-very satisfied)

When people over 40 years of age compared the quality of the educational system today to that of Soviet times, it is considered to be better or much better by only 7.8% of the people while 6.6% thought the system was the same. The majority of the respondents, 46.3%, considered it to be worse than during the Soviet period while 39.3% stated that it is much worse today. There is no significant difference of evaluation among different groups.

During the in-depth interviews, complaints about the education system mostly focused on higher education, where anybody with sufficient money seems to be able to buy a certificate or a diploma, which indicates the rampant corruption in higher education.

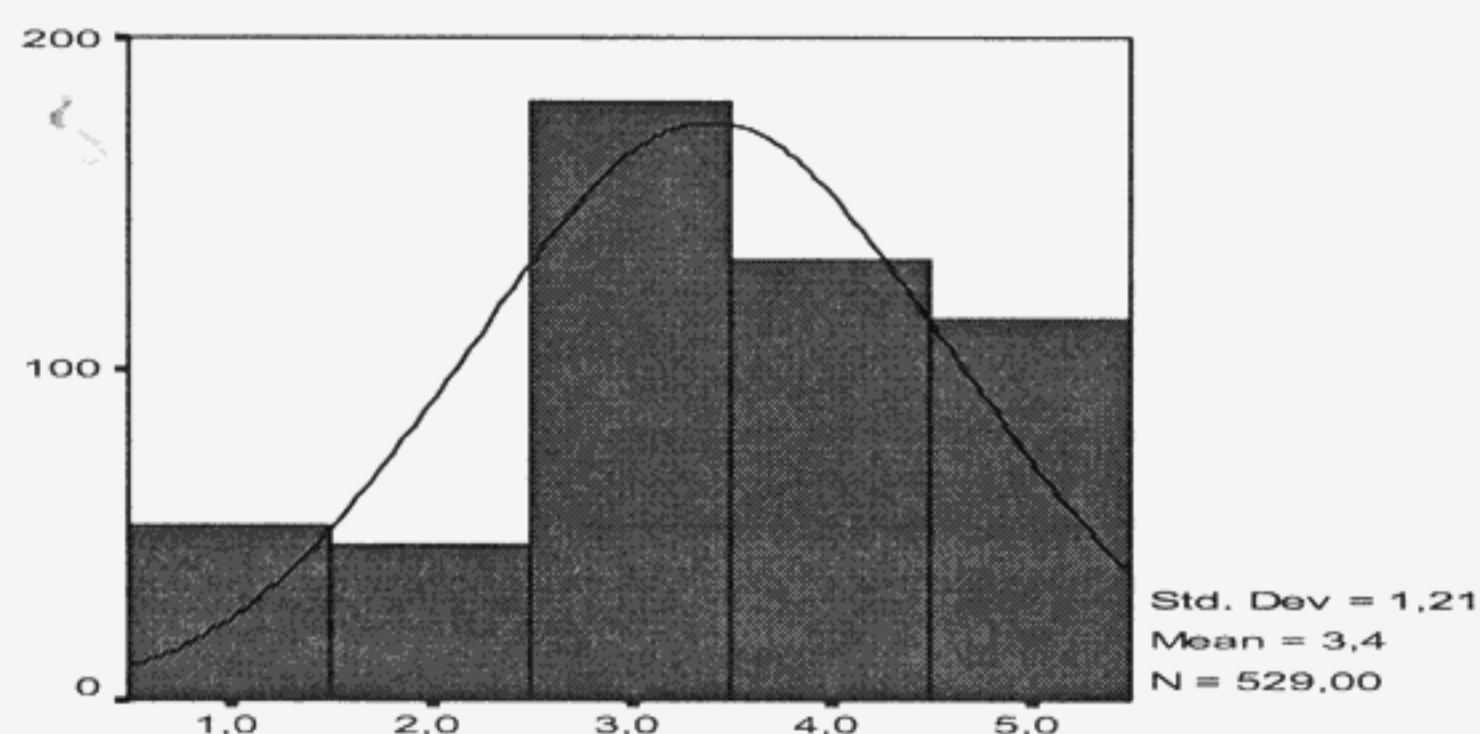


**Figure 3** Contemporary Education System Compared to Soviet Times

Looking at the health status of the respondents, half of the females and 63.4% of the males stated that they do not have any illnesses or other health problems. Females with serious illnesses make up 8.7% while the percentage of males with illnesses is a little less. The females who need to take regular medication are about one fourth of females while the percentage of males who need regular medication are less than one fifth. So in general, the respondents lead healthy lives.

As expected, elderly respondents are more likely to have diseases and disabilities that impede their daily activities. Half of the respondents over 50 years of age have illnesses to some degree and half use medications regularly, whereas 43.3% of respondents over 30 years of age have illnesses to some degree and a quarter use medications regularly. Only a quarter of the youth have illnesses to some degree while 10.4% use medications regularly.

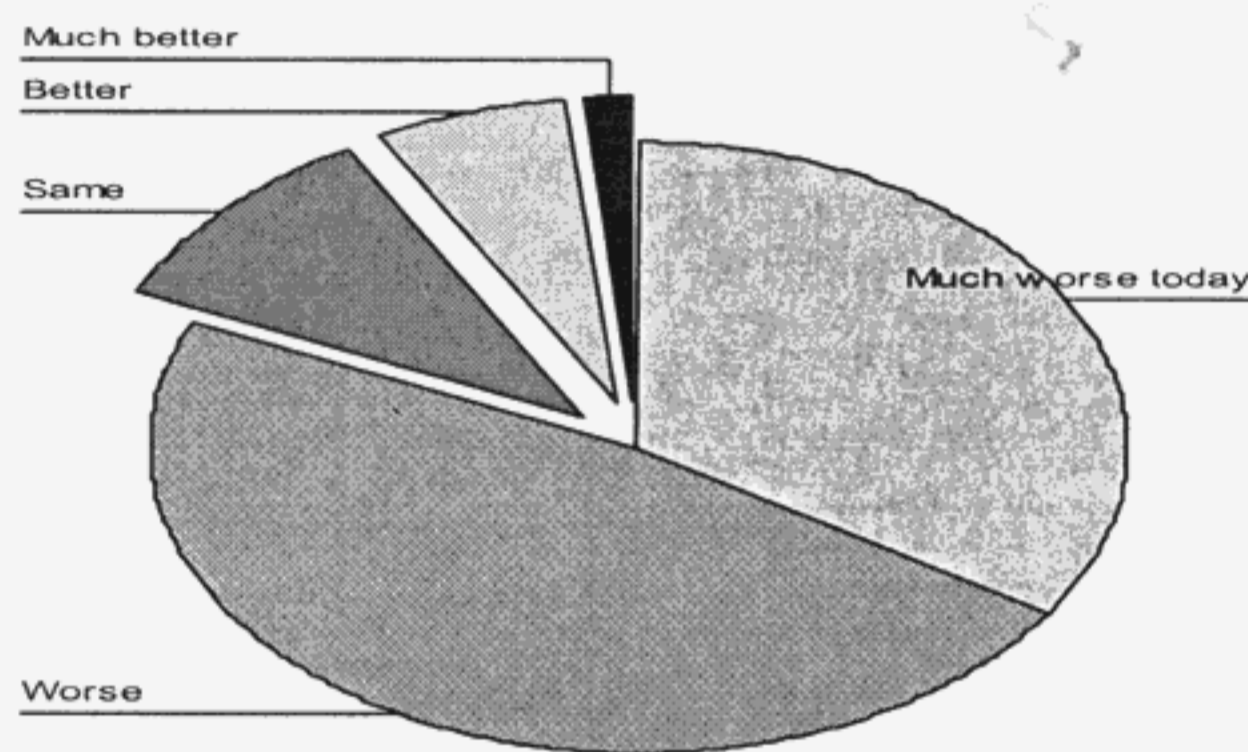
When the respondents evaluated their satisfaction with their state of health, the average is 3.4. About half are satisfied or very much satisfied with their health and about one third expressed an average level of satisfaction.



**Figure 4** Satisfaction with State of Health (1- not satisfied at all, 5-very satisfied)

Compared to the Soviet period, the health care system is considered to be better or much better by only 8.1% of the people who responded this question; 10.2% of those surveyed thought the system was the same. The majority of the respondents, 47.6%, found it worse than during Soviet times while 34.1 stated it is much worse today. There is no significant difference of evaluation among different groups.

The complaints about the health care system were parallel to those regarding the corruption in education. People said the doctors were not as good as those during Soviet times, since they could easily become doctors just by paying enough for a diploma. Secondly, the doctors are themselves corrupt, since they do not earn much from their salaries and resort to asking for bribes for health care. Third, the infrastructure of the hospitals is old and insufficient. Still, the system tries to survive within its inadequacies.



**Figure 5** Current Health Care System Compared to Soviet Times

**Necessities and Ownership**

Studies show that “lack of life necessities presumably reduces quality of life.”<sup>5</sup> In this study respondents were asked to evaluate what they perceive as a necessity to live a good life and if they have access to those things. The perceptions of necessities in life are highly influenced by the society in which one lives. In the Soviet era, everyone had the same domestic products such as the same pair of shoes as well as the same glasses or similar chairs at home. With the dissolution of the USSR, people suddenly had access to consumer goods from the West, which were believed to be better than what they had. However, the illusion did not last long, as Western goods lost their attractiveness due to their high prices and not noticeably better quality. The perceptions of people who have lived during the Soviet times as well as the first years of the transition economy is crucial in understanding what goods and choices are considered necessary for having a good life.

First, a look at what people see as necessities for living a good life. The respondents in Adygeya see following items as basic necessities: refrigerator (96.6%), bath (90.7%), television (88.7%), cook stove with oven (87.9%), separate kitchen in house (86.3%), washing machine (83.7%), toilet in the house (75.2%), vacuum cleaner (74.0%), telephone (69.1%), own room (65.7%), new clothes (61.1%), car (56.9%), and cellular phone (54.0%).

The following items are seen as desirable by a majority: video camera (58.6%), replacement of furniture (55.5%), vacation in-country (53.9%), vacation abroad (52.3%), photography camera (51.1%), computer (49.6%), being able to invite friends at least once a month to one’s home (49.4%), Internet access (48.4%), garden (48.0%), being able to take out one’s family at least once a month (47.7%), and dishwasher (47.2%). There are no items in the ‘can be renounced’ category agreed upon by a majority of the respondents. However some of the above-mentioned items are seen by about



one third of the respondents as 'can be renounced': vacations, taking the family out at least once a month, Internet access, and/or a dishwasher.

What people consider necessary to live a good life is highly influential in defining the life standards of a society. More crucial is the ownership of those things that are necessary.

**Table 2** Perceived Necessity of Some Goods and Items

Necessity: has own room	Could be renounced	3.7%	
	Desirable	30.7%	
	Necessary	65.7%	
Necessity: bath	Could be renounced	.6%	
	Desirable	8.6%	
	Necessary	90.7%	
Necessity: garden	Could be renounced	15.8%	
	Desirable	48.0%	
	Necessary	36.2%	
Necessity: vacation (Adygeya: vacation In-country/abroad)	Could be renounced	28.2	37.3
	Desirable	53.9	52.3
	Necessary	17.9	10.4
Necessity: telephone	Could be renounced	6.0%	
	Desirable	24.9%	
	Necessary	69.1%	
Necessity: new clothes	Could be renounced	3.3%	
	Desirable	35.6%	
	Necessary	61.1%	
Necessity: replacement of furniture	Could be renounced	4.6%	
	Desirable	55.5%	
	Necessary	39.9%	
Necessity: invite friends to one's home	Could be renounced	10.0%	
	Desirable	49.4%	
	Necessary	40.6%	
Necessity: take out family at least once a month	Could be renounced	36.5%	
	Desirable	47.7%	
	Necessary	15.8%	
Necessity: car	Could be renounced	4.6%	
	Desirable	38.4%	
	Necessary	56.9%	
Necessity: television	Could be renounced	1.1%	
	Desirable	10.3%	
	Necessary	88.7%	
Necessity: washing machine	Could be renounced	2.1%	
	Desirable	14.1%	
	Necessary	83.7%	
Necessity: dishwasher	Could be renounced	35.6%	
	Desirable	47.2%	
	Necessary	17.2%	
Necessity: computer	Could be renounced	18.3%	
	Desirable	49.6%	
	Necessary	32.1%	
Necessity: cellular phone	Could be renounced	8.6%	
	Desirable	37.4%	
	Necessary	54.0%	
Necessity: toilet	Could be renounced	3.4%	
	Desirable	21.4%	
	Necessary	75.2%	
Necessity: separate kitchen in house	Could be renounced	2.1%	
	Desirable	11.6%	
	Necessary	86.3%	
Necessity: refrigerator	Could be renounced	.6%	
	Desirable	2.8%	
	Necessary	96.6%	
Necessity: vacuum cleaner	Could be renounced	4.3%	
	Desirable	21.7%	
	Necessary	74.0%	
Necessity: cook stove with oven	Could be renounced	1.3%	
	Desirable	10.8%	
	Necessary	87.9%	
Necessity: Internet access	Could be renounced	27.2%	
	Desirable	48.4%	
	Necessary	24.4%	
Necessity: photography camera	Could be renounced	14.8%	
	Desirable	51.1%	
	Necessary	34.1%	
Necessity: video camera	Could be renounced	22.6%	
	Desirable	58.6%	
	Necessary	18.8%	

In terms of the items seen as necessary by the majority of respondents, ownership may be listed in perceived order of necessity: refrigerator (98.1%), bath (80.6%), television (98.8%), cook stove with oven (92.6%), separate kitchen in house (85.2%), washing machine (81.0%), toilet in the house (63.9%), vacuum cleaner (80.7%), telephone (68.6%), own room (58.6%), new clothes (65.9%), car (53.4%) and cellular phone (83.4%).

Therefore, with the exception of a house where each household member has a room of one's own and a car, most things seen necessary in life are owned by the respondents in Adygeya.

**Table 3** Ownership and Actualization of Some Goods and Items

ownership: own room	have or do	58.6%	
	don't do or have	41.4%	
ownership: bath	have or do	80.6%	
	don't do or have	19.4%	
ownership: garden	have or do	57.5%	
	don't do or have	42.5%	
ownership: vacation (in- country / abroad)	have or do	9.6	3.5
	don't do or have	90.4	96.5
ownership: telephone	have or do	68.6%	
	don't do or have	31.4%	
ownership: new clothes	have or do	65.9%	
	don't do or have	34.1%	
ownership: replacement of furniture	have or do	34.7%	
	don't do or have	65.3%	
ownership: invite friends	have or do	66.2%	
	don't do or have	33.8%	
ownership: take out family	have or do	15.1%	
	don't do or have	84.9%	
ownership: car	have or do	53.4%	
	don't do or have	46.6%	
ownership: television	have or do	98.8%	
	don't do or have	1.2%	
ownership: washing machine	have or do	81.0%	
	don't do or have	19.0%	
ownership: dishwasher	have or do	5.5%	
	don't do or have	94.5%	

ownership: computer	have or do	32.7%
	don't do or have	67.3%
ownership: cellular phone	have or do	83.4%
	don't do or have	16.6%
ownership: kitchen	have or do	85.2%
	don't do or have	14.8%
ownership: toilet	have or do	63.9%
	don't do or have	36.1%
ownership: refrigerator	have or do	98.1%
	don't do or have	1.9%
ownership: vacuum cleaner	have or do	80.7%
	don't do or have	19.3%
ownership: cook stove with oven	have or do	92.6%
	don't do or have	7.4%
ownership: Internet access	have or do	17.1%
	don't do or have	82.9%
ownership: photograph y camera	have or do	65.4%
	don't do or have	34.6%
ownership: video camera	have or do	15.5%
	don't do or have	84.5%

Desirable items can also be listed according to the level of their desirability: video camera (15.5%), replace furniture (34.7%), vacation in-country (9.6%), vacation abroad (3.5%), photo camera (65.4%), computer (32.7%), being able to invite friends home at least once a month (66.2%), Internet access (17.1%), garden (57.5%), being able to take out one's family at least once a month (15.1%), dishwasher (5.5%).

Here, the situation is a little complicated. A majority of the respondents own a photography camera and are able to invite friends to their home at least once a month. Replacing old furniture is much more desirable than its realization. Going on vacation is not possible for the majority of those that wishes to; only a few households own a dishwasher and not many a video camera. The computer ownership and Internet access are equally desired but only half of the computer owners have access

to the Internet due to the existing bad telecommunication infrastructure and the low number of service providers.

A general self-assessment of standards of living by the respondent is necessary to better understand the situation in Adygeya. When the people of Adygeya were asked to evaluate their level of satisfaction with their conditions considering all domains of life, the average (2.5) reveals that they are not much satisfied. 38.1% of the responses to the 'life standard satisfaction' category are average, followed by 24.2% who are not satisfied at all. One fifth of the respondents stated they are not very satisfied with their lives. Those who are satisfied or completely satisfied make up only 16.3% of the respondents.

### **Conclusion**

A comparative analysis of the assessment of satisfaction across the five fields, which pertain the society and residence showed that people living in Adygeya were most satisfied with the people around them and expressed their lowest satisfaction with public security in all districts.

The respondents seem to be satisfied of their education and health systems. However, comparison of the present education and health services to those of the Soviet period are highly informative and give an interesting point of view. The quality of educational and health systems are widely believed to have fallen rapidly, parallel to the transition problems that created a collapse in social, economic and political sub-systems.

The perception of necessity of some items was nearly equal to the actualization of these things. On the other hand, the ownership of most desired items was relatively low.

The data analysis revealed the satisfaction with standards of living are not very high in the Republic of Adygeya, even though they have good health, good levels of education, good rates of employment and at least a regular income to satisfy their basic needs, as well as some having the chance to satisfy their desire for non-necessities. This poor self-assessment is in spite of overall satisfaction with their residential neighborhoods, limited security concerns, few environmental issues, and having access to the basic infrastructures necessary to live a comfortable life.

I believe that this negativity can be attributed to 'learned deprivation.' For the elderly and the pro-socialists, the dissatisfaction is very much due to a nostalgic longing for the Soviet past. On the other hand, for the youth, the low satisfaction is linked to their worries about the future.

During the Soviet era, citizens were provided with whatever was needed to live an adequate life. People had jobs, job security and a regular income. Education and health care was provided by the state free of charge. A decent place to live, basic residential needs (Russian: *communalni uslugi*) and the everyday needs of a household were supplied at little cost. Each communal district had its recreation areas, Cultural Halls, and other features to make it livable. The society was a communal one where each was an individual but part of a larger society. The Soviet regime gave an ordinary citizen the necessary resources (having), necessary structures to become someone (being) in a society where each was part of a bigger entity (loving)<sup>6</sup>.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, standard resources were no longer guaranteed for all. The market economy brought with it a variety of choices for everything. The freedom to choose among choices created a dream of something better. The systems corrupted and people started buying what they needed rather than achieving them. Someone could become a doctor without studying hard in medical school or could become a rich doctor by taking bribes. People lost their enthusiasm to live as part of a community. They started to become more and more individualistic.

Older people, who lived during Soviet times, felt dissatisfaction with this change. Different than the senior generation, the youth who experienced the transition, adapted to the concepts and strategies of the "new" world. Money – intrinsic to capitalism – became all that they cared about and their satisfaction level was thus highly influenced by their worries about financial conditions in the future.

Although Soviet ideology argued that all were equal and had the same, some people were in a better situation than the others. The people in close relation to “the Party” had better advantages in terms of housing, health care, education, jobs and even access to trade items from the West. With the dissolution, this gap between the haves and the have-nots widened. The reason is no longer political connections or personal networks as under the Soviets but economic affiliations and social status.

**Table 4** Perception of the Realization of Personal Freedoms, Rights and Life Chances Related to the Economy

Freedoms, Rights and Life chances	Fully realized	Partly realized	Not realized	Realized
Social security	5.1%	59.1%	35.8%	PARTLY-
Support for those in need	2.5%	55.6%	41.9%	PARTLY-
Job opportunities	4.2%	48.0%	47.8%	PARTLY-
Just and fair distribution of wealth	8.2%	40.0%	51.8%	NOT+

The evaluation of the ‘realization of some rights, freedoms and life chances’ category reveals that there is only a partially realized system of social security: people feel insecure in their jobs, unsure of their health care and lack confidence in their institutions of higher education. They believe people in need should be supported by the state (as in the Soviet times) and they perceive this as only partly realized. The category of job opportunities is seen as partly realized or not realized by nearly all respondents. The last and the worst perception is the non-realization of just and fair wealth distribution, which is the primary reason for the feeling of relative deprivation of the respondents in Adygeya.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sociologist, Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Abkhazia

<sup>2</sup> *Geografiya Respubliki Adygeya* [Geography of the Republic of Adygeya] Maikop, 2001, p 5.

<sup>3</sup> Adygeya State University, The Republic of Adygeya, <http://www.adygnet.ru/english/aboutadyg/aboutadygheya.shtml> and "Adygeya, Russia," *Britannica Student Encyclopedia* 2006. Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service. 11June2006 <<http://www.britannica.com/ebi/article-9315861>

<sup>4</sup> *Respublike Adygeja Desjat' Let: socialno-jekonomicheckie itogi* [Ten years of the Republic of Adygeya: Socio-economic conditions] Maikop, 2001). p.183.

<sup>5</sup> Delhey, Jan, *Life Satisfaction in an Enlarged Europe*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2004, [www.eurofound.eu.int/qual\\_life](http://www.eurofound.eu.int/qual_life).

<sup>6</sup> The typology of “Having, Loving and Being” emerged as an alternative to the existing welfare research that considered only the economic and objective indicators, including the self-assessment of living conditions in the analysis. See Erik Allardt, Having, Loving, Being: An Alternative to the Swedish Model of Welfare Research in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Nussbaum and Sen, March 1993, pp. 88-95(8).

## **Economic Challenges: A Case Study**

## ECONOMICS OF SMALL STATES AND GLOBALIZATION: LESSONS FOR THE CAUCASUS

*Erol Taymaz*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

There were about 75 states right after the Second World War. As a result of the decolonization process and the disintegration of large states like the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the number of internationally recognized states and territories increased dramatically, and exceeded 200 by the end of the second millennium. The increase in the number of states was accompanied by the proliferation of complex modes of sovereignty and statehood. Moreover, this process has changed the size distribution in favor of small countries: the world now comprises a large number of small countries. According to the data covered by the World Bank's *World Development Indicators*, 18 out of 210 countries and territories had a population of less than 100 thousand in 2005, 33 less than 250 thousand, 57 less than 1 million, and 98 less than 5 million.<sup>2</sup>

The increase in the size of small states has raised a debate on the costs and benefits of "smallness". It is suggested by many researchers that the development of small states is hindered by a number of unavoidable obstacles such as high production costs (they will not be able to benefit from economies of scale due to the small size of the domestic market), high transportation costs (most small states are located in remote regions), and transaction costs (small size would increase the cost of governance). Moreover, since they would not be able to have a diversified economy, they are likely to be vulnerable to adverse external shocks. The process of globalization could amplify these problems because international cost differences would be more important in the global economy, and the globalization of economic activities, especially financial activities, would make it easier to transmit economic crises in primary developed markets to the rest of the world.

In this chapter, we analyze if these arguments are supported by the data. We analyze the relationship between country size and economic performance measured by income (GDP per capita), growth (per capita growth rate), volatility (in growth rates), sectoral specialization, and international openness. Our analysis shows that small states may suffer from certain size-related disadvantages, but they could overcome most of these disadvantages by taking appropriate measures. Moreover, the empirical evidence suggests that small states, on average, do not perform worse than large states do, i.e., the size of the state/country does not matter for economic performance. There is no evidence to claim that the *de facto* independent states of the Caucasus could not establish viable economies because of their small size.<sup>3</sup>

The chapter is organized as follows. After this brief introduction, we summarize the criteria used to define "smallness" in Section 2. The problems and advantages of small states are discussed in Section 3. Section 4 presents the empirical evidence on the relationship between the size of the country and its economic performance. The effect of the process of globalization on small states, and policy implications are analyzed in Section 5. The last section of the chapter summarizes main findings.

### What is "Small"?

There is no accepted definition of a small state. There are various variables used to measure "size" and for each variable researchers and international organizations adopt different threshold values for "smallness". The most commonly used variables are population, income level, and land area.<sup>4</sup>

Total income as measured by Gross Domestic product (GDP) is one of the variables used as a measure of the size of a country. Since GDP is measured in monetary terms, it is converted to a common currency (usually US\$) based on market exchange rates or, preferably, on purchasing power parity. The lack of reliable data for many countries and fluctuation in exchange rates limit the use of income as a measure of size.

Land area (or, in some cases, usable land area) is employed by some researchers to define size because it can reflect a country's economic potential. Land area is a static variable and can change only through changes in country boundaries.

Population has frequently been used to measure country size because the population data are available for most of the countries for a long time period, and it directly shows the number of people under consideration. There are different threshold (or cut-off) levels suggested to define "smallness". It is interesting to observe that the "average" threshold level tends to decline over time. As Crowards (2002) mentions, the threshold level was around 10-15 million in the 1950s and 1960s, but it declined to 5 million in the 1970s and 1980s, and to around 1-1.5 million in the 1990s. The decline in the threshold levels over time coincides with the increase in the number of "small" states. The threshold levels were downward modified to avoid classifying most of the states as "small."

Currently, there are different threshold measures suggested in the literature. For example, some international organizations such as the UNCTAD, GSSE, World Bank, and Commonwealth Secretariat prefer to use smaller threshold values (about 1-1.5 million). Academicians tend to adopt somewhat higher values, for example, 3 million by Armstrong et al. (1998); 5 million by Collier and Dollar (1999) and Bräutigam and Woolcock (2001). Although academicians justify their threshold values by some criteria, such as "a natural break in the population size continuum" (Armstrong et al., 1998), these criteria are not much different than arbitrarily chosen values.

The size distribution of all countries and sovereign territories in the world in 2006 is depicted in Figure 1.<sup>5</sup> The population data are presented in logarithmic scale. In 2005, the five most populous countries in the world were China (1305 million), India (1095 million), and the USA (296 million), Indonesia (221 million), and Brazil (186 million), and the five least populous ones were the Cayman Islands (45,000), Liechtenstein (34,750), Monaco (32,500), San Marino (28,200), and Palau (20100).<sup>6</sup>

There seems to be an obvious break in the population size continuum, but the distribution gets steeper for the population size smaller than 4 million. There are 90 countries and territories with a population less than 4 million. If a standard threshold of 1 million is used, 57 countries will be classified as "small." These countries are listed in Table 1. Even a cursory look at Table 1 reveals that small states do not constitute a homogenous category. Although most of them are islands, there are even some land-locked small countries (the most striking one is Luxembourg). Some of these countries have a very small area (almost half of them have an area less than 1000 square km), but some of them have huge territories (for example, Greenland is 410,450 sq km, Guyana 214,970 sq km, and Suriname 163,270 sq km). Some are really very poor (income per capita is only US\$ 398 in Timor-Leste, US\$ 534 in Comoros), but some are among the richest countries in the world (Luxembourg US\$ 63,066, Iceland US\$ 38,622, Qatar US\$ 36,138, and the Isle of Man US\$ 25,994).

Table 2 presents the same data for the Caucasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia), three *de facto* independent states (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh), and two neighboring countries (Russian Federation and Turkey). The Caucasian states are about the middle-sized in the world's population and land distribution whereas the Russian Federation is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and Turkey 18<sup>th</sup> by population. In terms of land area, the Russian Federation is the largest country in the world (about 17 million sq km), whereas Turkey is the 36<sup>th</sup> (0.8 million sq km). The *de facto* independent states are "small" in terms of population and area, but, as shown in Table 1, there are many countries in the world much smaller than these countries.

### **Costs and Benefits of "Smallness"**

Does the country size matter for economic growth? This issue has been studied extensively by many researchers who suggest that small country size, under certain conditions, could be detrimental for economic growth.<sup>7</sup> We can classify the potentially negative effects of smallness on growth in four categories: 1) limited size of the domestic market, 2) limited domestic resource base, 3) vulnerability,

and 4) limited scope for public policy (for comprehensive reviews, see Armstrong and Read, 2003; Horscroft, 2005).

The *limited size of the domestic market* is regarded as the most important constraint on growth in small countries. First, the extent of specialization and division of labor is limited by market size. If the markets are small, there is no scope for specialization and division of labor, and the firms will not enjoy the benefits due to specialization/division of labor such as higher efficiency/productivity, and frequent product and process innovations. Hence, they will not be able to be competitive against foreign firms even in the own domestic market. Moreover, if there are economies of scale in production, i.e., if fixed costs of establishing production facilities, or investment in intangible assets such R&D and marketing are high, unit production costs will be higher for those firms that produce for small markets. It is also stressed by some researchers that the pro-competitive effects of larger markets are also important. If the market is small, there will be only one or a few firms in the market that produce a certain product. In other words, markets will not be competitive in small countries, and the firms will not be under the efficiency- and growth-enhancing pressure of competitive markets.

The cost of governance – and, hence, the tax burden on the industry – will be high in small states. Economies of scale are certainly very important in the production of many public goods. Thus, the per capita costs of public goods (defense, judicial system, foreign representations, museums, etc.) are likely to be lower in larger countries. For example, each state needs a certain minimum set of constitutional laws and regulations, and the cost of preparing these laws and regulations does not depend on the country size.

The second set of factors constraining the growth potential of small countries is related to the *limited domestic resource base* and *high transaction costs across borders*. Small countries, almost by definition, will have limited domestic resources. More importantly, their domestic resources will be not diversified, i.e., the production of certain products and services would be prohibitively expensive in small countries that do not possess the resources necessary for these products and services. They can, of course, import these products (and, in some cases, services) from other countries, and the process of globalization, the decline in trade barriers, and the development of new communication and transportation technologies reduce transaction and transportation costs (Winter and Martins, 2004). However, as Alesina et al. (2005) show, even in the absence of explicit trade barriers, “crossing borders is indeed costly, so that economic interactions within a country are much easier and denser than across borders. This is true both for trade in goods and financial assets.” Thus, small countries that produce only a small set of the products they consume face extra importing costs.

*Vulnerability of small countries to external shocks* is another issue that needs to be addressed (for a detailed analysis, see UNCTAD, 1997). As mentioned above, because of the lack of a diversified resource and production base, small economies will tend to concentrate their activities in certain sectors and products. The lack of diversification makes small states vulnerable to external (economic, political and environmental) shocks, and that vulnerability may constrain their growth potential.<sup>8</sup>

Vulnerability has a social and regional dimension as well. Larger countries are better able to reduce the negative effects of imperfectly correlated external shocks to different sectors and regions. If a sector or region is negatively affected by a shock, larger countries can reallocate resources from other sectors/regions to the affected ones, or to move people from the affected sectors/regions to others. Small countries, of course, would not be able to apply these policies because of the lack of sectoral/regional diversification.

Finally, the *constraints on public policies* in small countries would be another factor that hampers economic growth. Small countries are likely to have weaker states/governments because they will be weaker economically, politically, and militarily: Since they do not have much power to set their own



terms in international relations, they are less likely to follow policies favorable for their own development. In other words, political weakness could be another obstacle for economic growth.

The arguments in favor of large country/state size as summarized above are valid to a considerable extent. However, if country size yielded only benefits, there would be only one state in the world. This is not the case because large size has its own costs, and small size has some compensating benefits.

First of all, as Aristotle wrote in *Politics*, "experience has shown that it is difficult, if not impossible, for a populous state to be run by good laws" (cited by Alesina et al., 2005). As a country gets larger, its administrative and congestion costs become higher at an increasing rate. The increase in the heterogeneity that comes with larger size raises administrative costs of larger states. Although large states can transfer a part of their authority to local governments that could provide better public services to locally diversified population groups, some policies would nevertheless remain at the national level without due attention to the diversity in the population. In contrast, small states could provide public services more effectively.

Another factor that could favor small countries is related to social cohesion and social capital. Small countries, thanks to their small population size, can develop stronger social bonds among its citizens, and, if established, networks of trust could substantially reduce transaction costs in the economic and political spheres. Traditions and norms, instead of codified laws and regulations, could provide the basis of policy and exchange, and it could be relatively easier to achieve consensus in policy making and implementation. In this context, Fors (2007) found that "islands and small countries exhibit relatively stronger institutional quality," and she suggests that high institutional quality in these countries could be due to either their colonial background, or their accumulation of social capital. Similarly, Baldacchino (2005) proposes to adopt the "social capital" framework to understand "how many (though not all) small, peripheral and network-driven island societies develop 'good governance' practices and manage a commendable standard of living."

The economies, and, to a large extent, societies of small countries are open to the world. As mentioned above, small countries have a less diversified economy and have to interact with the world to obtain products and services that they need. Openness to the world economy together with the lack of diversification is the source of their vulnerability to external shocks, but small countries could turn this fact of life into an opportunity. Their intense interactions with many countries could enlarge the scope for knowledge exchange, and could help them to accumulate human capital, especially if there is some degree of labor mobility between small countries and their larger neighbors. Compatriots (or diasporas) living in other countries could develop networks both of knowledge and of trade, which would benefit the home country.

Although small states are usually (but not always) weaker economically and politically than larger states, there is ample room for independent policy making, and creating niche markets. Offshore banking is an often-cited example of a niche market created in small island countries. Tourism is another example, which is probably relevant for a greater number of small countries. Specialization in tourism as an option for economic development is criticized by some researchers and policy makers as it is a sector vulnerable to external shocks (armed conflict, changes in preferences of consumers in developed countries, the power of multinational companies, etc.). However, empirical evidence shows that smallness does not have a negative effect on economic growth, and small tourism countries grow significantly faster than all the other sub-groups considered (OECD countries, oil producer countries, less developed countries, etc., see Brau et al., 2004).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, specialization in this rapidly growing sector could be rather advantageous for small countries.

Finally, those small countries that have close and special relationships with a large country can grow rapidly because small countries in such a case would not bear some of the costs the larger countries

are faced with (such as defense, jurisdiction, etc.), but can enter into and benefit from the large market by using its social capital to develop niche markets, innovate differentiated products and services, as well as utilizing its networks of compatriots. In a similar context, Bertram (2004) found that small islands countries converge to the income level of their metropolitan patrons in the core of the world economy.

This brief discussion of the costs and benefits of “smallness” indicates that there are various factors that may obstruct economic growth in small countries. However, small countries can have certain distinct advantages as well, and they can achieve higher income levels by making the most of these advantages if they adopt suitable policies. Therefore, the question of the relationship between economic performance and smallness is basically an empirical issue, which we will analyze in the following section.

### **Economic Performance of Small States: The Evidence**

Do larger countries have higher income per capita? As mentioned in Section 2, of the five largest countries in the world in terms of population (China, India, the USA, Indonesia and Brazil), only the USA is a rich country. Although the income data are not available, three of the world’s smallest five countries are known to be wealthy (Liechtenstein, Monaco, and San Marino). Luxembourg was the richest country in the world in 2005 (per capita income was about US\$ 80,000), but it is a small country by any standard (its population was less than 500 thousand, and its area only 2590 sq km).

In this section of our study, we will present the data on the relationship between economic performance and country size. We use a number of variables to measure economic performance (GDP per capita, GDP growth rate, and growth volatility), and a number of related indicators (the composition of GDP, openness, life expectancy, and share of workers’ remittances in GDP). The data are from the World Bank’s *World Development Indicators Database* (2006), and average values for the 2001-2005 period are used to eliminate annual fluctuations in variables. The database covers 210 internationally recognized countries and territories. In all figures, the data points for Armenia (ARM), Azerbaijan (AZE), Georgia (GEO), Turkey (TUR), and the Russian Federation (RUS) are indicated by their country labels. Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia are not included because they are not covered in the World Bank database.

The relationship between GDP per capita and size (measured by the population of the country/territory) is seen in Figure 2 (both variables are in logarithmic form). Three Caucasian countries for which the data are available (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) had almost the same level of income per capita (about US\$ 1000) in the period 2001-2005. It is obvious that GDP per capita does not increase by country size measured by population. There is even a negative correlation between GDP per capita and population and the correlation is statistically significant.<sup>10</sup>

What is important in the long run is the GDP growth rate. Therefore, we also looked at the relationship between the average annual growth rate of GDP in the 2001-2006 period and population (Figure 3).<sup>11</sup> Azerbaijan has an impressive growth rate (17 percent), partly due to high oil prices. It seems that Armenia and Georgia have recovered quite rapidly after the collapse of their economies in the 1990s. The Russian Federation and Turkey achieved high growth rates as well. Two largest countries in the world, China and India, have also been very successful in raising their GDP.

It is apparent from Figure 3 that there is no correlation between GDP growth and country size. The correlation coefficient between these two variables is positive, but it is not different from zero at the 5 percent level, i.e., there is no statistically significant correlation.

Small countries are likely to have more specialized economies, i.e., they are less diversified, and, therefore, their economies would be more vulnerable to external shocks and consequently less stable. We measured instability by the standard deviation of the annual GDP growth rates in the period 2001-2006. Figure 4 depicts the relationship between growth instability and country size.<sup>12</sup>

The negative correlation between instability and size is obvious and significant. Small countries have much more volatile GDP growth rates, but this does not necessarily mean that the average growth rate is lower for small states.

The structure of an economy is important because it determines its growth potential, for example, the growth rate of the demand for agricultural products is usually lower than that for manufactured products, and its stability. We present the data on the shares of agriculture, industry, and services in GDP by country size in Figures 5-7. There is no correlation between the share of agriculture in GDP and country size, but the correlation between the share of industry and country size is positive and significant. As may be expected, larger countries have stronger industrial bases, because large domestic markets help them to exploit economies of scale in industrial activities, and to develop industrial division of labor. The correlation between the share of services and size is negative and significant. This finding supports the argument that small states tend to specialize in certain service sectors (e.g., tourism, off-shore banking, etc.).

The openness of an economy is usually measured by the country's exports and imports. We present the data on the shares of exports and imports in GDP in Figures 8 and 9, respectively.<sup>13</sup> These two variables have strongly and negatively correlated with country size. Small countries have much higher exports/GDP and imports/GDP ratios than large countries, because they have to trade intensively with other countries. The data show unequivocally that small countries have much more open economies, and foreign markets play an important role in their economic development.

As in the case of trade, population mobility is higher in small countries that have proportionately more compatriots living in foreign countries due to political and economic factors. Thus, workers' remittances can play an important role for the development of small countries. The data on the share of workers' remittances in GDP are presented in Figure 10.<sup>14</sup> Among the Caucasian countries, Armenia has a very high share of workers' remittances (15.3 percent). In other words, the total value of remittances Armenia received from its diaspora from 2001 to 2006 equals to its annual GDP. It is also quite high for Georgia (about 6 percent). There is a strong, negative correlation between the share of workers' remittances and country size: small countries really benefit from their compatriots working in foreign countries.

Finally, we looked at the relationship between life expectancy and country size (see Figure 11). Life expectancy is about 71-73 years in the Caucasian countries and Turkey. It is rather low in the Russian Federation (65 years). It fell off in the Russian Federation as a result of the decline in social and economic conditions after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

There is a negative correlation between life expectancy and country size and the correlation is statistically significant at the 6 percent level,<sup>15</sup> i.e., people live longer in small countries. However, Figure 11 reveals that the negative correlation between life expectancy and country size is driven mainly by very small countries with a population of less than 500 thousand people. As shown in this figure, life expectancy exceeds 60 years for all the countries that are comprised mainly by islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific and in the European countries and territories. When this group of countries is excluded, we found no correlation between life expectancy and country size.

Our descriptive analysis shows that country size is not critical for economic performance, i.e., small countries are not poorer. They are, however, more specialized in services, and have more open economies. Their economies might be vulnerable because of the lack of diversification, and unstable, but "vulnerability" seems to have no measurable impact on income growth and level.

Our findings are consistent with the multivariate analyses of other researchers. For example, Easterly and Kraay (2001) find in their study that small states indeed have higher per capita GDP than other states after controlling for location. This income advantage is largely due to a productivity advantage. They have greater volatility of growth rates, partly due to their sensitivity to terms of trade shocks

that, it turn, is a result of small states' greater openness. However, the net effect of openness on growth is positive. Similarly, Armstrong and Read (2003) suggest that "there is no empirical evidence of a systematic negative relationship between small size and growth in spite of a priori expectations." Moreover, location plays an important role for growth: those small states located closer to wealthy and high-growth regions are likely to have higher rates of growth and levels of income, but geographic isolation is not an insuperable barrier to growth.

Regarding political status, former dependencies and sub-national island jurisdictions are found to perform better than sovereign islands (Armstrong and Read, 2003). The difference is explained by the "special" status of these islands. As McElroy and Pearce (2006) put it, they benefit from "the best of both worlds. Island jurisdictions wield many of the benefits associated with political sovereignty while they are delegating responsibilities to, and enjoying the security and reaping the material benefits of, remaining in association with a larger, and typically richer, patron."

Small countries can be successful against all size-related odds. One of the main factors behind their success is institutional quality and "good governance" practices. Small countries can establish high quality institutions thanks to their human capital and social cohesion, and these institutions in "combination with jurisdictional powers" may generate sustainable growth in small countries (Baldacchino, 2005).

### **Globalization and Prospects for Small States**

The concept of "globalization" is defined in various ways. In this study, we use the concept to refer to the increasing integration of national economies as resulting from 1) reductions in transportation and communication costs by new technologies, 2) gradual elimination of trade barriers by multilateral agreements and participation in international organizations, and 3) convergence in preferences, rules, and regulations.

Globalization as such may have significant impact on small countries (for a comprehensive analysis on the implications of globalization for small island states, see Read, 2004). Globalization may have negative effects for small countries because international cost differences are likely to be more important in resource allocations on the global scale. Small countries are usually located far from main markets, and are faced with higher transportation costs. Moreover, it is suggested that population and economic activities continue to concentrate in and around large urban centers in large countries. Finally, the decline in transportation, communication, and transaction costs make resources, most importantly financial resources, more mobile, and these changes are likely to increase the vulnerability of small countries.

Globalization can also offer opportunities for small countries, and these opportunities could even offset its negative effects. First, as a result of the decline in transportation and communication costs, the size of the domestic market in small countries is no longer a constraint on their development; producers in small countries can sell their products in the global markets. Moreover, it is suggested that new technologies increase production flexibility, and eliminate cost differences between small and large-scale production. Thus, small country producers, by specializing in niche-technology or location-specific products and services, can increase their output and achieve a more diversified production base. Finally, migration, especially cyclical migration, would have a stronger impact on economic growth in small countries. Cyclical migration allows peoples of small countries seeking work or education to migrate to larger and richer countries, and re-inject resources in the form of workers' remittances and human capital to develop their countries (Baldacchino, 2006).

Large countries can also benefit from globalization but it is suggested that small countries are better positioned than large countries to benefit from globalization because they have already more open economies. Thus, as Alesina et al. (2005) claim, the benefits of country size go down as international

economic integration increases, and “economic integration and political disintegration should go hand in hand.”

Public policy gains more importance for development in small countries in the face of globalization. As Bräutigam and Woolcock (2001) mention, “a more integrated global economy may enable smaller states to adapt quickly to changing conditions, and to more readily pursue strategic development policies.” Moreover, jurisdictional independence of small countries helps them to pursue independent policies beneficial to their own development. However, in order to enjoy the benefits of jurisdictional independence, small countries need to strengthen their social cohesion, build strong and high quality institutions, and adopt “good governance” practices.

### **Conclusions**

There is a substantial literature on the relationship between country size and economic development. Findings of theoretical studies are ambiguous because “country size” could have both positive and negative implications for performance. Thus, the issue is basically empirical, and the empirical evidence show indisputably that “size” is not an obstacle for development. There are many small countries in the world that are even more successful than large countries, and the factors behind success are quite diverse. Therefore, there are various options for development for small countries.

These findings confirm that the argument against the independence of small countries on the basis of the impossibility of establishing viable and sustainable economies is false. Small states, as the data show, can establish prosperous, viable and sustainable economies, and this will be the case for the *de facto* independent states of the Caucasus and, specifically, the Republic of Abkhazia<sup>16</sup>, as well. For example, Abkhazia has all main elements of success for small countries: 1) high levels of social cohesion and social capital, 2) high level of human capital, 3) self-sustaining agriculture and rich natural resources, 4) generous social, historical, and physical environment for tourism, and 5) the tradition of building consensus in policy-making. What is lacking is free and open interaction with its neighbors and other countries in the world. Abkhazia is very likely to achieve rapid development and high levels of income by adopting compensatory economic policies when political recognition and thus economic stability are achieved.

### **NOTES**

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<sup>2</sup> A similar distribution is observed for the area of these countries and territories as well. 37 of the countries and territories in the world are smaller than 1,000 square km and 47 countries smaller than 10,000 square km. The smallest one is Monaco (only 2 sq km). Some examples for small countries are as follows: Malta 320 sq km, Barbados 430, Singapore 699, Bahrain 710, Hong Kong 1092, Luxembourg 2590, and Cyprus 9250.

<sup>3</sup> This paper was written before Abkhazia and South Ossetia were recognized as independent states by the Russian Federation on August 26, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> There are some composite indices based on a number of size-related variables. For example, Crowards (2002) uses cluster analysis to classify countries into various size categories. In spite of its attractiveness as a multi-dimensional variable, composite indices are mainly used in academic work.

<sup>5</sup> The source of the data used in all figures is the World Bank (*World Development Indicators Database*, 2006). Unless otherwise stated, we present the average values for the 2001-2005 period.

<sup>6</sup> Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino, and Palau became members of the United Nations in 1990, 1993, 1992, and 1994, respectively. The Cayman Islands are a British overseas territory located in the western Caribbean Sea, i.e., the Cayman Islands are under United Kingdom sovereignty, but not a part of the United Kingdom itself. The most recent members of the United Nations are Montenegro (2006), Switzerland (2002), and Timor-Leste (2002).

<sup>7</sup> Almost all of these studies treat country size (population or land area) as fixed and exogenous. However, as Alesina et al. (2005) show convincingly, country borders “are not exogenous geographical features: they are a man-made institution,” and, therefore, should be treated as endogenous.

<sup>8</sup> However, the link between vulnerability and growth is not obvious. An empirical study by Armstrong and Read (2002) even finds a positive correlation between “vulnerability” (as measured by Briguglio’s Vulnerability Index) and growth. On the basis of their findings, Armstrong and Read criticize the conceptual shortcomings in the analytical literature on small states, and suggest that the Vulnerability Index is mis-specified.

<sup>9</sup> The empirical findings of McElroy (2006) suggest that “successful tourism-driven small islands represent a special insular development case and an alternative to migration, remittances, aid and bureaucracy.”

<sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise stated, “statistically significant” means statistically significant at the 5 percent level. When China and India are excluded, correlation gets weaker, and becomes statistically significant only at the 7 percent level.

<sup>11</sup> Equatorial Guinea is now shown in the figure because it had a very high growth rate (22 percent).

<sup>12</sup> Iraq and Equatorial Guinea are excluded because they had very high instability scores (36 and 24, respectively).

<sup>13</sup> The countries with very high exports/GDP and imports/GDP ratios (higher than 100 percent) are not shown in these figures. The countries are Singapore, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Malaysia and Macao for exports, and Singapore, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Guyana and Lesotho for imports.

<sup>14</sup> Tonga is excluded because of its very high share of workers’ remittances in GDP (39 percent).

<sup>15</sup> It becomes statistically significant at the 5 percent level when China and India are excluded.

<sup>16</sup> Recall that “small” is a relative measure. The population of Abkhazia is higher than total population of six UN member states: Palau, San Marino, Monaco, Liechtenstein, St. Kitts and Nevis, and the Marshall Islands.

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## TABLES AND FIGURES

**Table 1** Small countries and territories in the world, 2006

Country	Population	GDP capita (US\$)	Size (sq km)	Country	Population	GDP capita (US\$)	Size (sq km)
Palau	19933	6702	460	Netherlands Antilles	179016		800
San Marino	28100		60	Samoa	182228	1712	2840
Monaco	32400		2	Vanuatu	203326	1418	12190
Liechtenstein	34433		160	New Caledonia	225811		18580
Cayman Islands	44000		260	French Polynesia	248534		4000
St.Kittsand Nevis	46903	8161	360	Barbados	268195	10111	430
Faeroe Islands	48200		1399	Belize	274120	3606	22970
Greenland	56712		410450	Iceland	290279	38623	103000
American Samoa	57433		200	Maldives	313455	2224	300
Marshall Islands	59031	2195	180	Bahamas, The	314440	17230	13880
Bermuda	63028		50	Brunei Darussalam	357583	13966	5770
Andorra	66067		468	Malta	398470	11909	320
Dominica	71368	3717	750	Suriname	443496	2352	163270
Isle of Man	74696	25994	572	Luxembourg	448591	63066	2590
Northern Mariana Islands	78167		477	Solomon Islands	453959	571	28900
Antiguaand Barbuda	80087	9661	440	Macao, China	454132	18425	28
Seychelles	83168	8280	460	Equatorial Guinea	481318	7888	28050
Kiribati	96140	599	730	Cape Verde	483871	1597	4030
Aruba	99433		190	Comoros	575917	534	2230
Tonga	101569	1648	750	Bhutan	606550	1044	47000
Grenada	104599	4123	340	Montenegro	635622	2527	14026
Virgin Islands (U.S.)	108771		350	Bahrain	705828	14123	710
Micronesia, Fed.Sts.	108884	2087	700	Cyprus	726430	16835	9250
St.Vincent	117802	3278	390	Qatar	730353	36139	11000
Channel Islands	148358		909	Guyana	748728	999	214970
Sao Tome and Principe	149523	650	960	Djibouti	763976	828	23200
St.Lucia	160999	4532	620	Fiji	833432	2613	18270
Guam	163785		550	Timor-Leste	878919	398	14870
Mayotte	172667		374				

Note: The data for population and GDP per capita refer to average values for the 2001–2005 period.

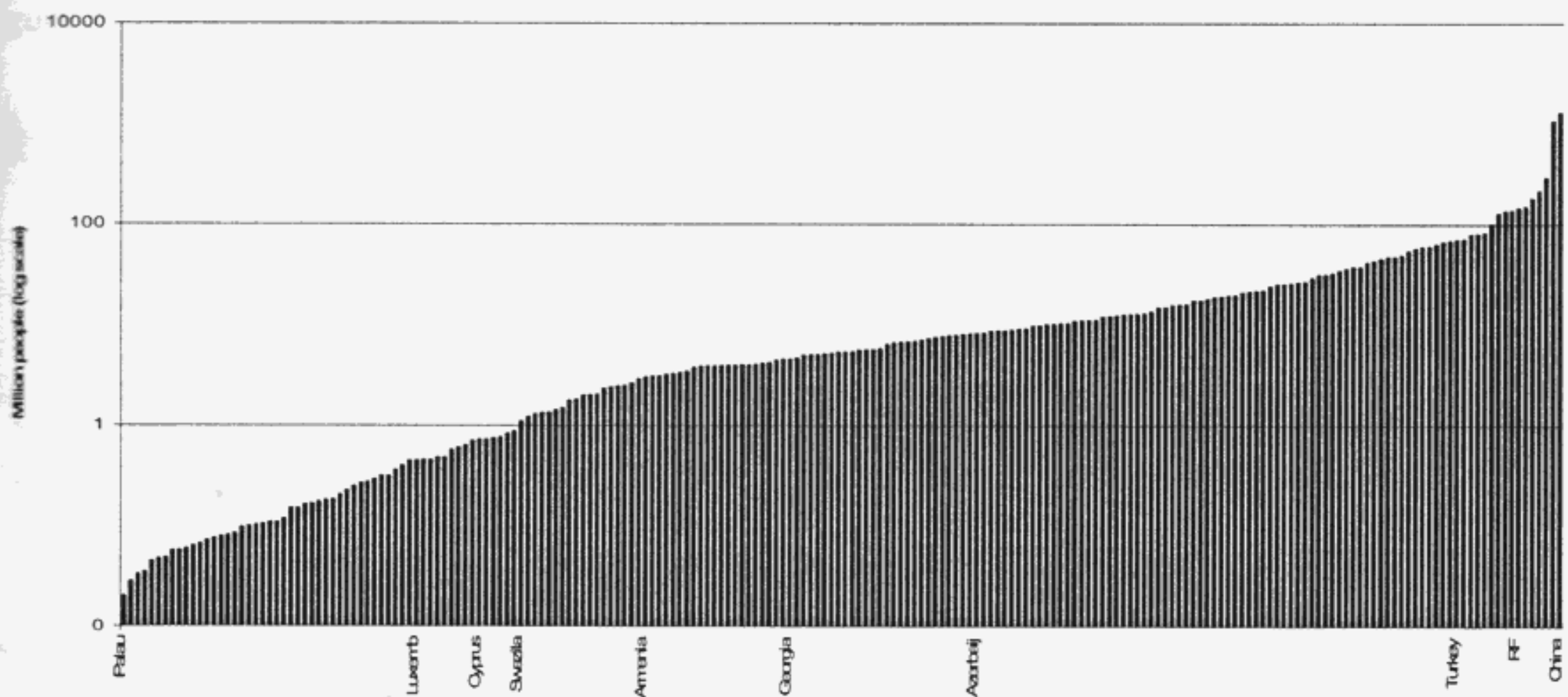
Source: World Bank. *World Development Indicators Database*, 2006.

**Table 2** Caucasian states and Turkey, 2006

Country	Population (thousands)	GDP capita (US\$)	Size (sq km)
Armenia	3039	1040	29800
Azerbaijan	8242	995	86600
Georgia	4567	974	69700
Russian Federation	144562	3384	17098240
Turkey	70416	3491	783560
Abkhazia	216		8600
South Ossetia	99		3900
Nagorno-Karabakh	138		4400

Note: The data for population and GDP per capita refer to average values for the 2001-2005 period.  
 Source: World Bank. *World Development Indicators Database*, 2006. Population of Abkhazia: 2003 Census; South Ossetia: 1989 Census; Nagorno-Karabakh: 2007 estimate by the local government

**Figure 1** Size distribution of countries and territories in the world



**Figure 2** GDP per capita and country size

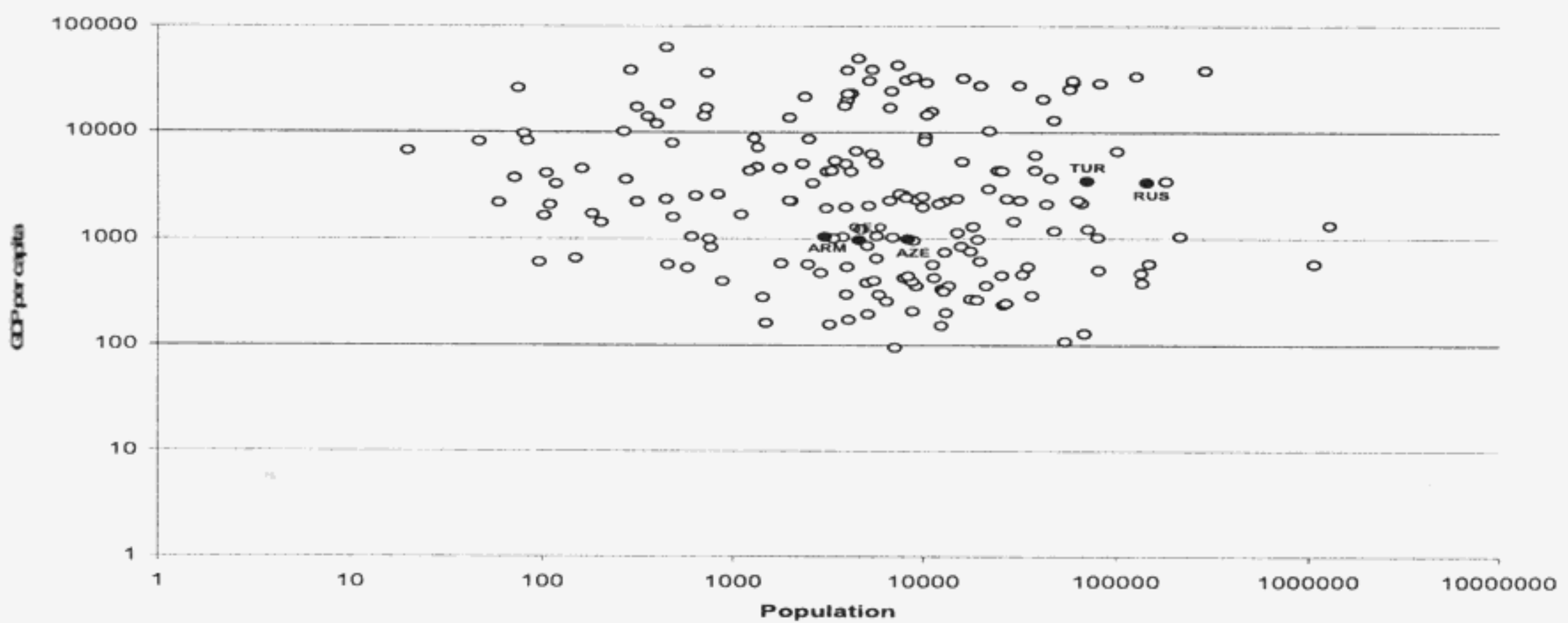




Figure 3 GDP growth rate and country size

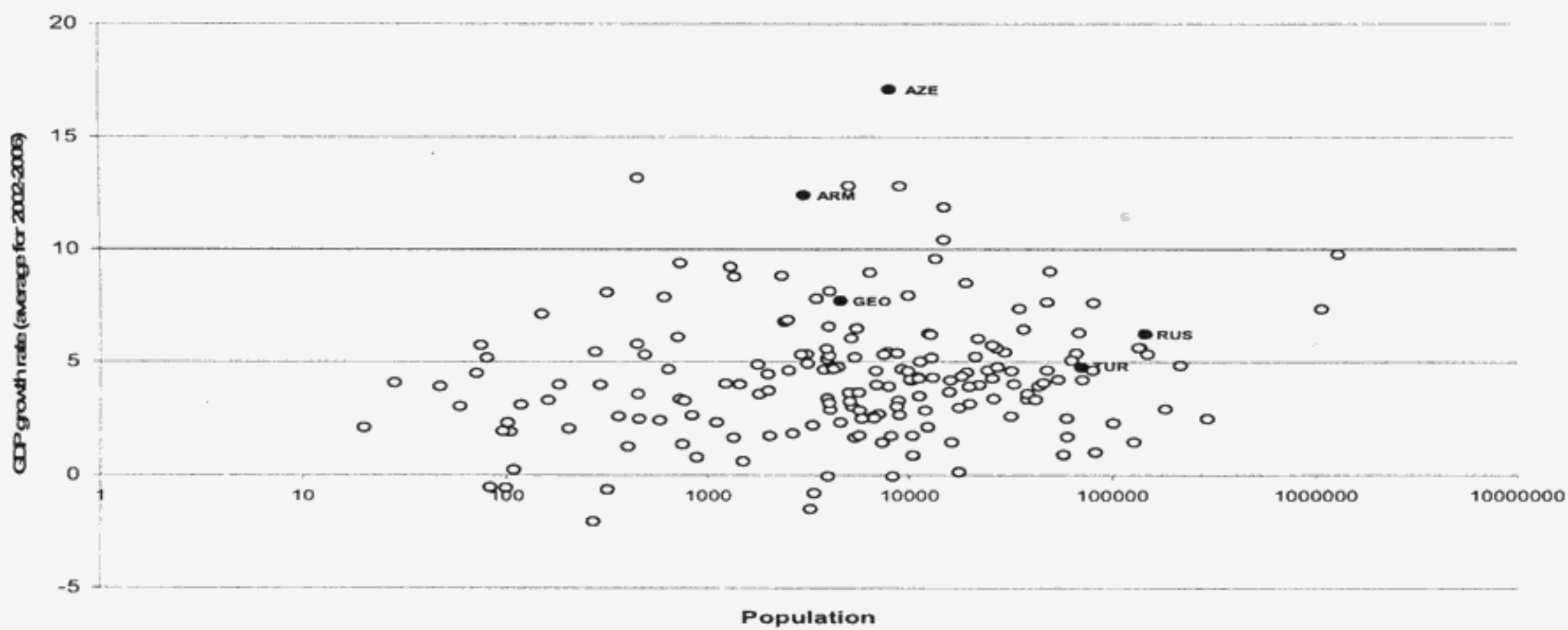


Figure 4 Volatility in GDP growth rate and country size

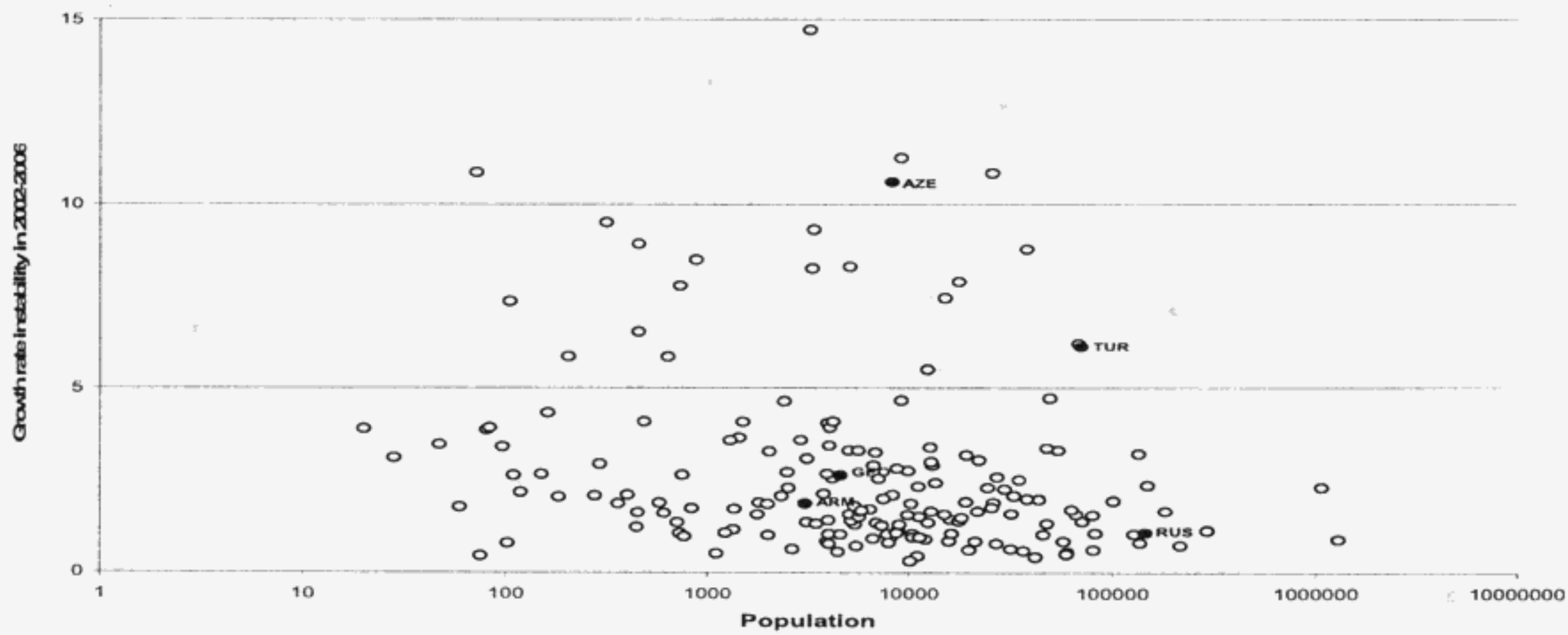
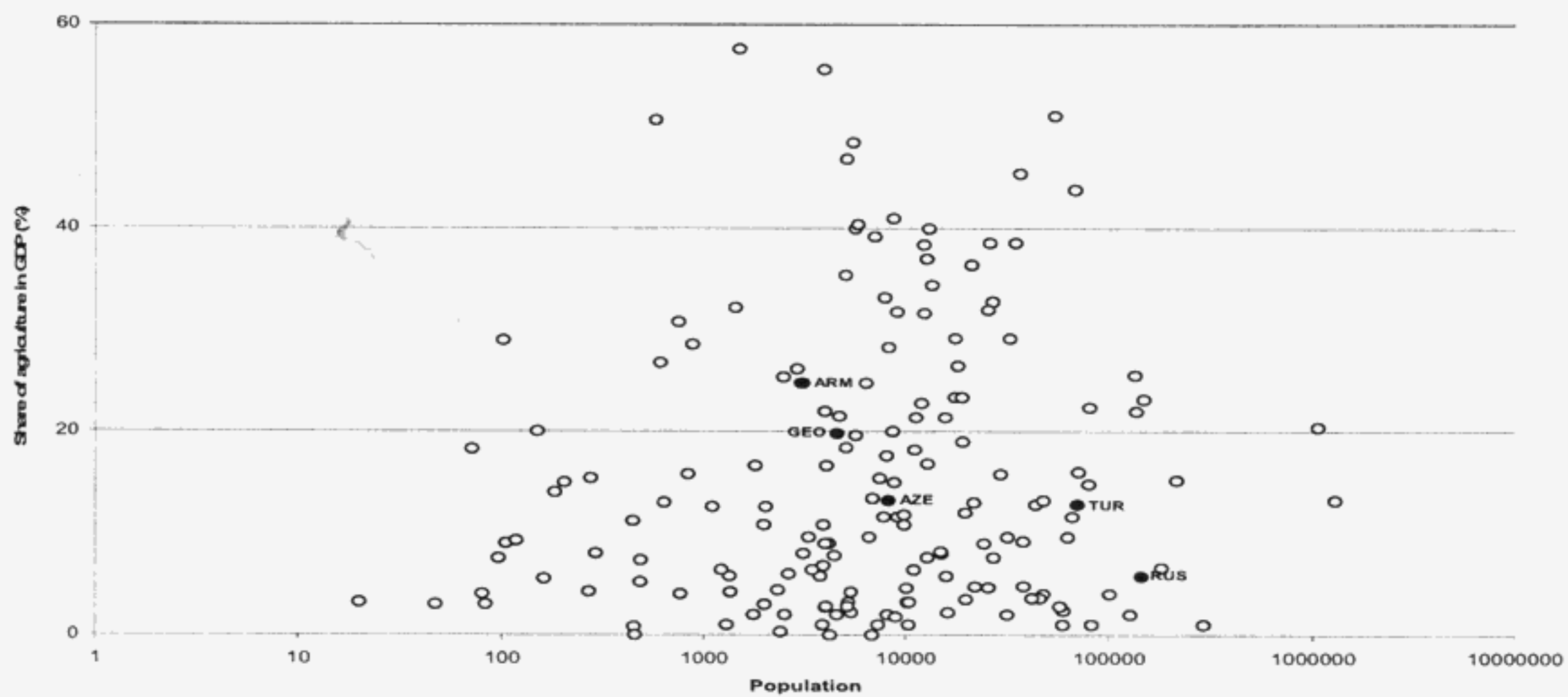
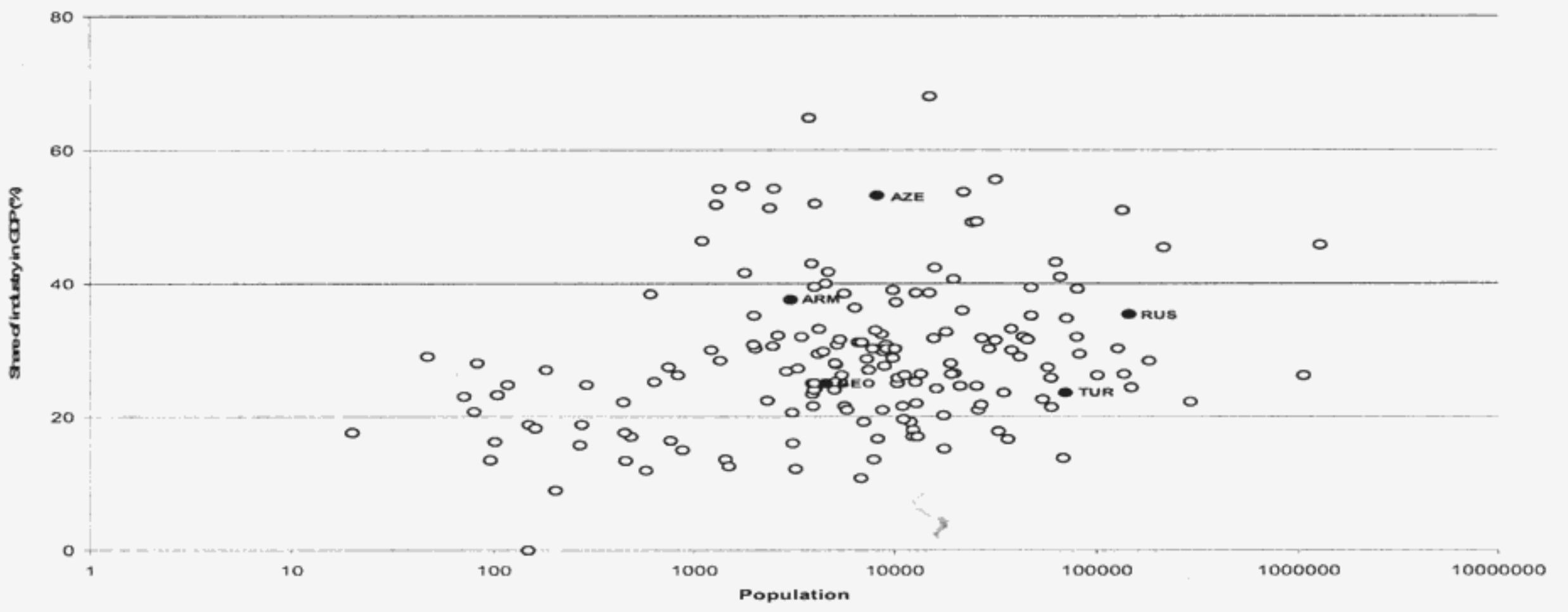


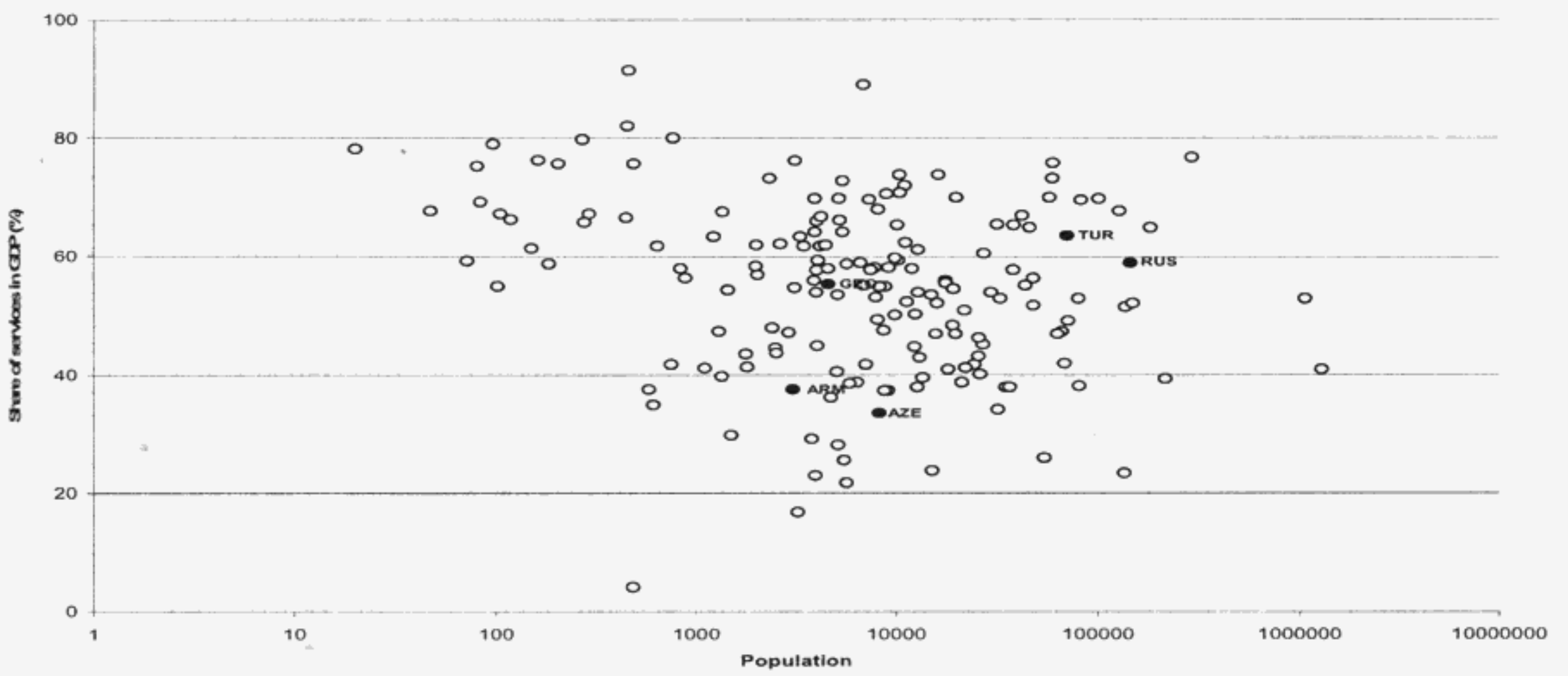
Figure 5 Share of agriculture in GDP and country size



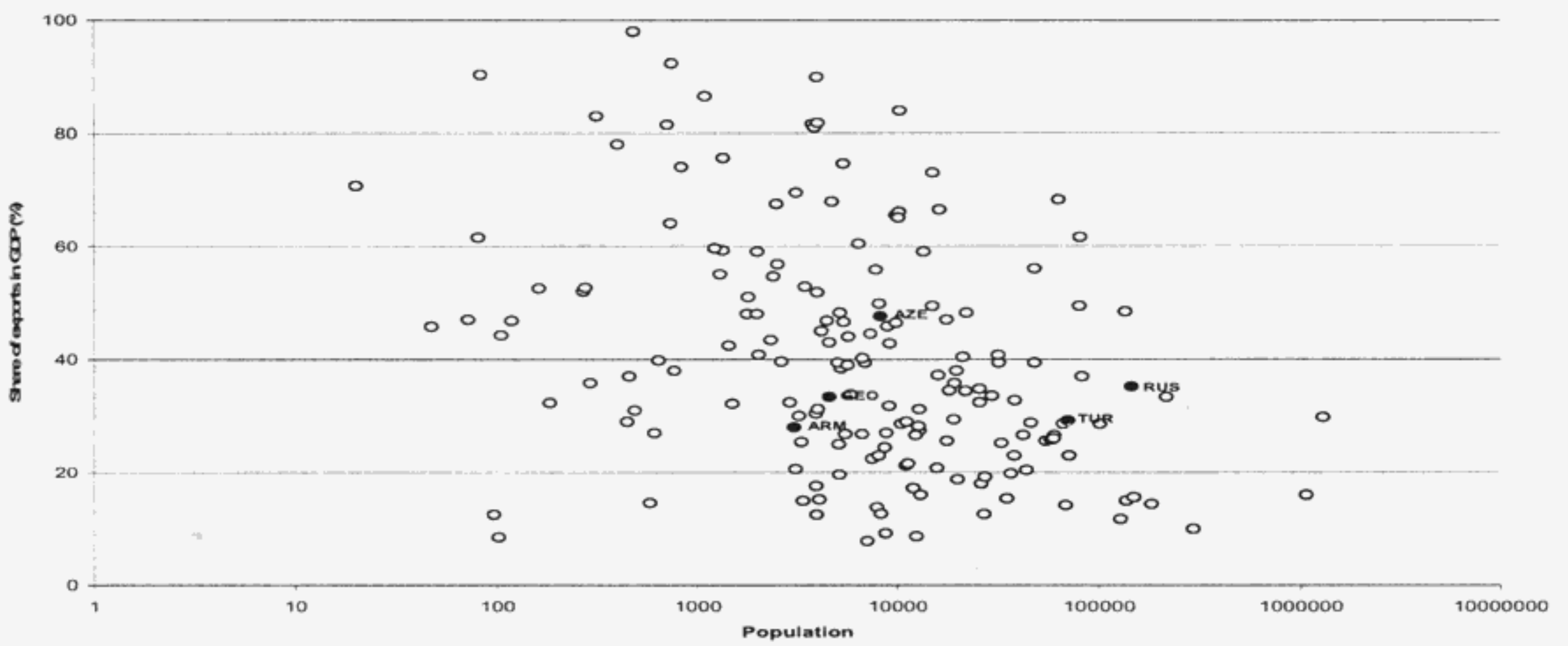
**Figure 6** Share of industry in GDP and country size



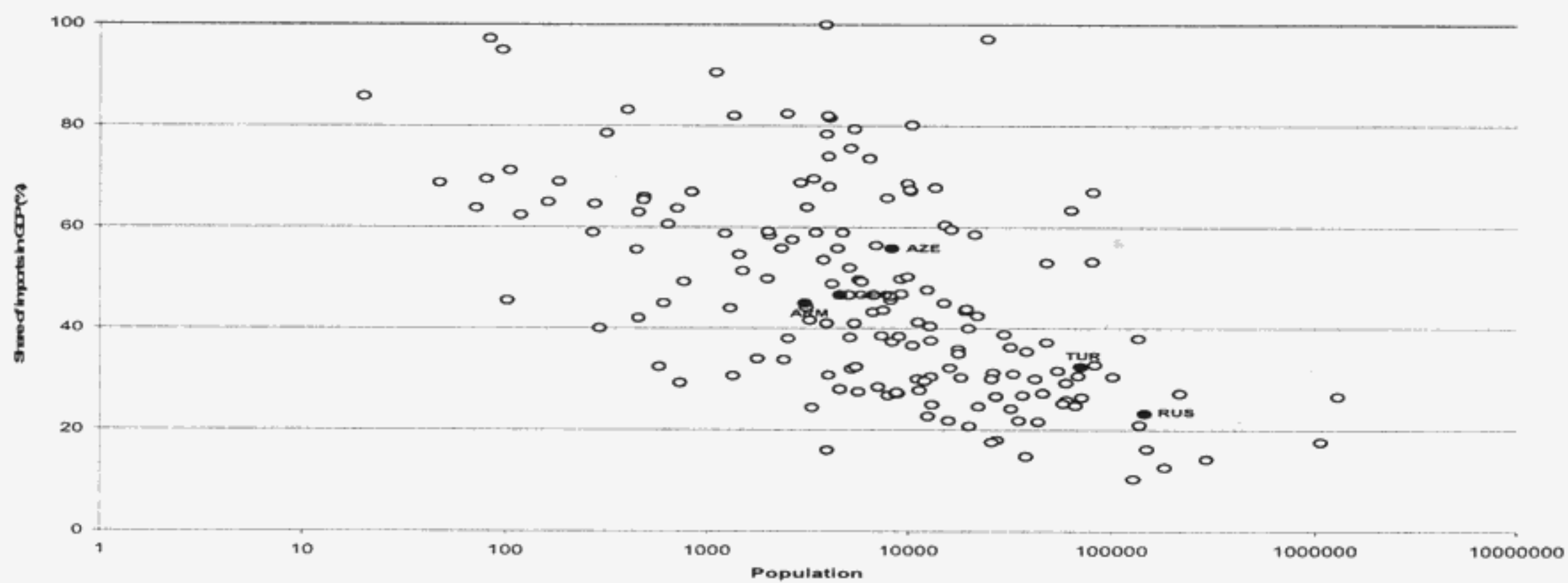
**Figure 7** Share of services in GDP and country size



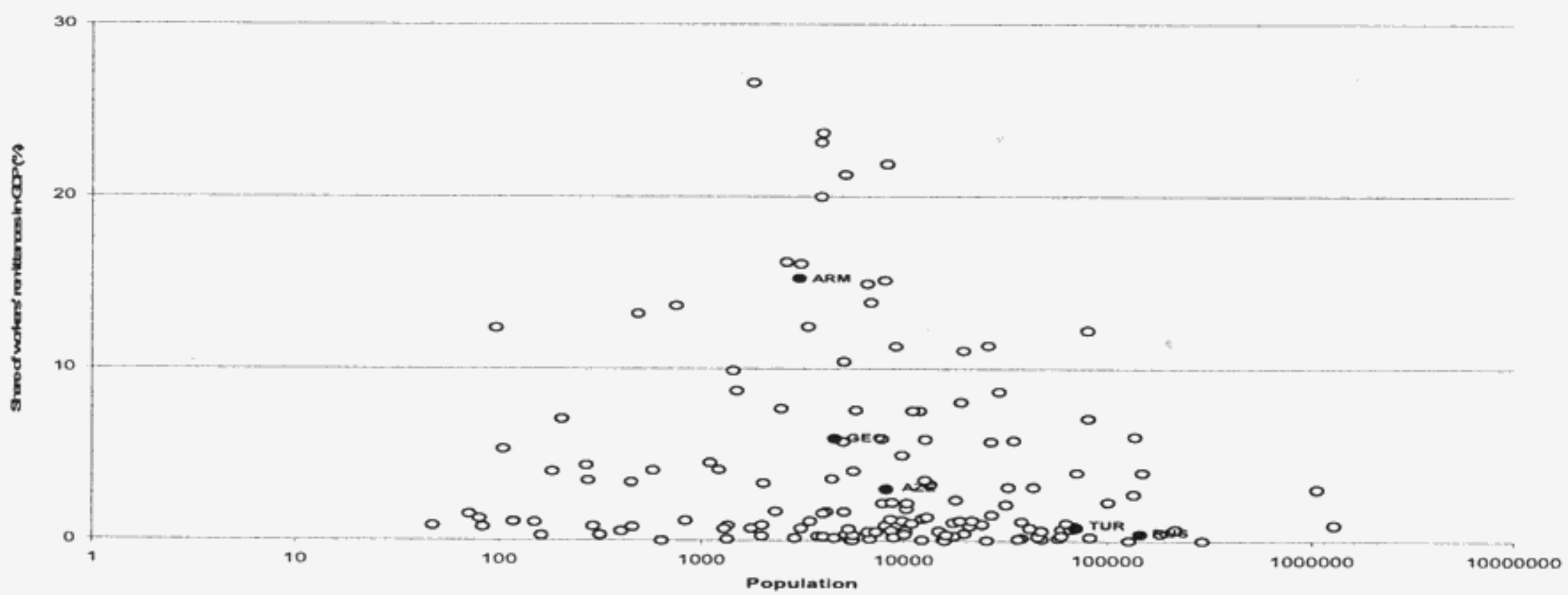
**Figure 8** Share of exports in GDP and country size



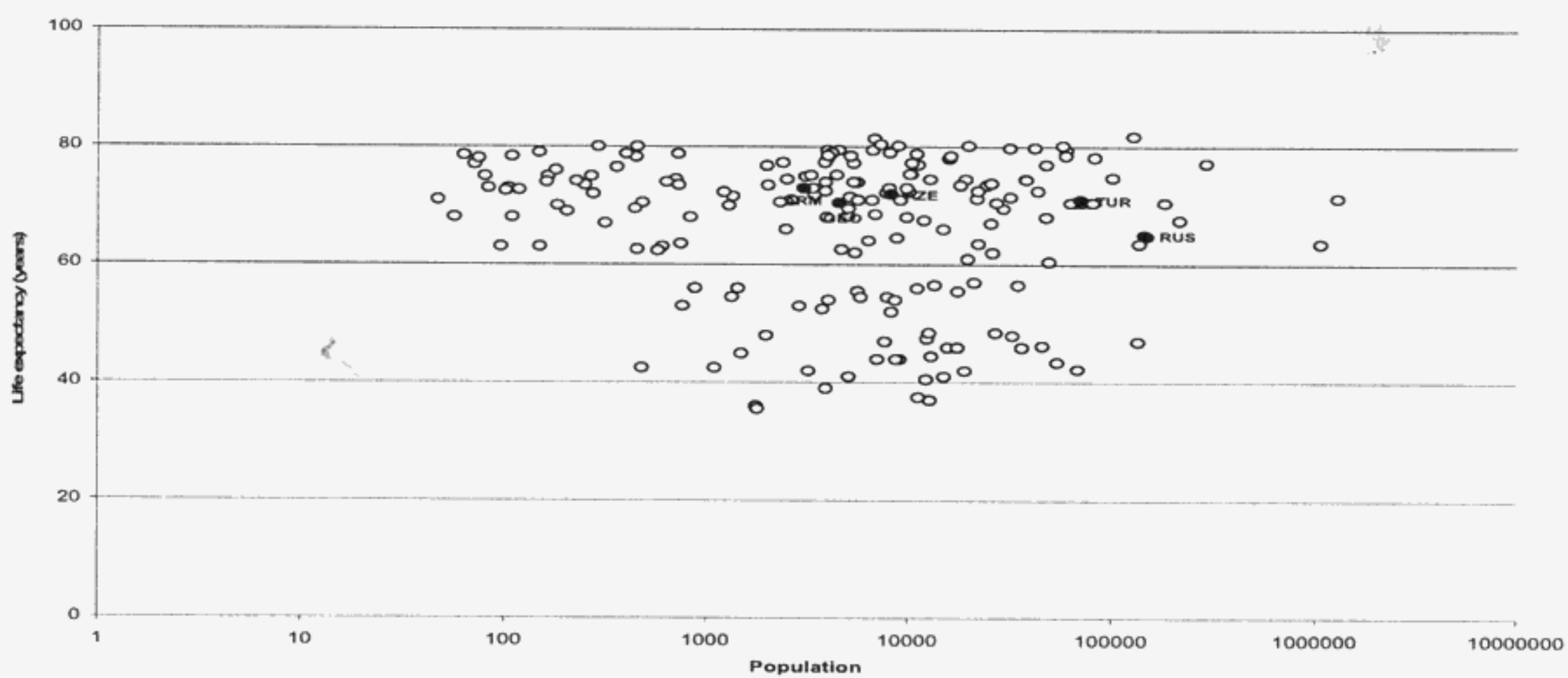
**Figure 9** Share of imports in GDP and country size



**Figure 10** Share of workers' remittances in GDP and country size



**Figure 11** Life expectancy and country size



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE OF ABKHAZIA

*Beslan Baratelia*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The historic events of the 1990s, including the sudden collapse of the Soviet system, the end of the Cold War, the appearance of new, post-Soviet independent states and their transition from planned economies to free and open market economies were the events of a lifetime.

All of these processes did not bypass Abkhazia, which continues its painful transition due mainly to the 1992-1993 war with Georgia, which caused considerable damage to the Abkhazian economy. According to official data, the total amount of the overall material damage caused by the war was approximately 11.3 billion US dollars.

The main sectors of the economy were seriously undermined. For instance, in agriculture the production of citrus fruit decreased from annual levels of between 100,000 and 120,000 tons down to 30,000 tons; the production of tea decreased from yields of 80,000 to 100,000 tons to between 5,000 and 6,000 tons; and tobacco dropped from 6,000 to 7,000 tons to the almost complete disappearance of this cultivar.

A similar situation occurred in industry. Before the fall of the Soviet Union, up to 500 industrial enterprises had operated in Abkhazia, and they employed more than 30,000 workers. After the breakdown of the country, Abkhazia was isolated from many raw materials and markets for its goods to such an extent that in the first post-war years, industrial production almost completely stopped. As a result the number of industrial enterprises decreased by more than 5 times of the pre-war level, with the gross output only 5% of the pre-war level. The number of people employed in industry decreased significantly: from about 30,000 people to only 2,500 people.

The tourism sector was in an even more difficult situation. In the pre-war years the number of sanatoriums, resort hotels and other tourist-hosting enterprises totaled 120, with a 30,000-person room occupancy capacity. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Abkhazian-Georgian war, more than 2 million people visited Abkhazia annually. These events practically stopped the functioning of this sector of the economy up to the end of the 1990s, and only recently, after the relaxation of economic restrictions on the Abkhazian-Russian border, has tourism in Abkhazia started developing again.

### Measures of Growth

Under such circumstances the main goal for Abkhazia was to create a national model of a new socio-economic system. From this perspective the crucial point is the ability of the state to choose an optimal strategy for its social and economic development, taking into account, firstly, the internal characteristics of the country, including its natural and human resources. Secondly, the general political situation in Russia and the Caucasus in particular as well as the global trajectories of the international economy, which are gradually affecting Abkhazia, although it seems to be relatively isolated, also need to be considered. In other words, these factors will become the main determinants for realizing the macroeconomic transformations in the country and the path of its foreign economic policy.

Despite these difficulties, the Abkhazian economy has been developing very dynamically, mostly due to its low starting level effect, the revival of its small business sector and the increase in demand for Abkhazian exports by the outside world.

Since Abkhazia only recently started the transition to the National Account System (NAS), the main macroeconomic indicator of the country – the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) – is not yet available. Nevertheless, the dynamism of the development of Abkhazia’s economy can be judged using other measures.

Most important of these is the gauge of gross production, which is summarized below in Table 1.

**Table 1** Abkhazian Gross Production Growth By Year – Rubles and US Dollars

Year	Gross production without external economic activities in mln. rubles	In million USD	Gross production with external economic activities in mln. rubles	In million USD
1999	854,6	35	1238,2	50
2000	1507,9	50	2158,5	75
2001	1892,3	65	2826,9	100
2002	2423,6	80	4086,9	136
2003	3051,5	100	5211,1	170
2007			14658,9	620
2008			18811,8	740

Source: Data of the Ministry of Economy of Abkhazia for 1999 to 2008.

The data from Table 1 shows that the growth rate of combined sectors of the Abkhazian economy for the last 5 years averaged about 20 percent per year. Indirectly national economic growth is also demonstrated by an increase in the average monthly salary and its purchasing power in relation to a list of 35 basic food items (indicated below as the “gain rate”).

**Table 2** Growth in Abkhazian Average Monthly Salaries and Gain Rates By Year

Year	Average monthly salary of state budget employees, in rubles	Average monthly salary	Gain rates of average monthly salary in dollar equivalents
1997	84,5	N/A	N/A
1998	120	5	N/A
1999	219,2	8,7	74%
2000	308,4	11	26%
2001	419,9	14,5	32%
2002	512,6	17	17%
2003	772,3		
2004	1122,4		
2005	1402,7	55	
2006	2003,1	80	

Source: Compiled from the State Management of Statistics Database of the Republic of Abkhazia.

Therefore, from 2000 to 2006, the average monthly salary of workers in the Abkhazian economy grew almost 8 times – in dollar equivalents, from \$11 to \$80 per month – although admittedly that is still very low. In 2006 the average monthly salary of state budget employees increased by 50% compared to the previous year; in 2007 it was raised another 30%; and in 2008, an additional 30% increase. However, because of the considerable importance of the unofficial “shadow economy,”

state salary statistics do not give an accurate picture of the living standards of Abkhazia's populace, which are higher than these figures suggest.

State budget income also reflects growth of the GDP. From 2000 to 2006, the state budget income grew 8 times, from 5.5 million US dollars to 40 million US dollars. Real average annual growth of the state budget was about 20%.

**Table 3** Annual Growth Rates of State Budget Income

Year	State budget income in mln. rubles	State budget income in mln. dollars	Growth rates of state budget in dollar equivalents
1997	52,4	...	...
1998	...	3,0	...
1999	113,7	4,0	33%
2000	173,0	5,5	38%
2001	192,2	7,5	36%
2002	260,2	9,0	20%
2003	348,8	12,0	33%
2004	472,7	17	
2005	709,4	26	
2006	1094,1	40	
2007	1246,3	50	
2008	1468,7	60	

*Source:* Compiled from the State Management of Statistics Database of the Republic of Abkhazia.

Growth in permanent employment figures also demonstrates growth of the economy. The number of officially registered employees in Abkhazia's economy doubled in the years between 1996 and 2006 from 17,900 people to 33,600 people.

Another measure of the Republic's economic activity is an increase in car and other vehicle imports, which grew from 104 units in 1999 to more than 1564 units in 2006.

Therefore, analysis of available statistical data reveals the growth of the economy accompanied by the improvement in Abkhazia's living standards. In spite of an intertwined set of unresolved problems, the country is making slow, but sufficiently confident steps in economic development. Abkhazia has proved its ability to manage its economy without depending on Georgia, without orienting itself to the Georgian economy, and without any economic assistance from Georgia.

### **Monetary Issues**

Although the development of the Abkhazian economy has taken place only during the last 15 years, quite distinctive traits are already emerging. The main feature of Abkhazia's present economy is the absence of a national money-issuing center and the use of the Russian ruble as its official national currency. This has led to considerable limitations on its ability to determine monetary policy, which is one of the most important instruments of macroeconomic policy. As a result, the Abkhazian government and its primary financial institution, the National Bank of the Republic of Abkhazia, cannot influence price levels in the economy, fight inflation, influence unemployment, regulate the rate of currency exchange and the balance of payments, or manipulate the cost of money in order to encourage national economic development. All of these processes are mainly exogenic and the economy can only adjust to them. By choosing to use the Russian ruble, Abkhazia's economy is becoming financially integrated into overall Russian economy, and while this has advantages, it also

means that Abkhazia is susceptible to the influence of financial and economic forces that are developing primarily mainly in Russia.

There are many historical examples of one country using another country's currency as its official national currency. Today there are more than 30 countries and territories in the world that have rejected a national currency in favor of a foreign currency, for example, Ecuador, Panama, Montenegro, and Puerto Rico. But the rejection of a national currency itself cannot resolve a country's social and economic problems and increase the pace of its economical growth, as evidenced by the fact that there are relatively rich as well as quite poor countries among those who eschewed a national currency. But at the same time, in spite of the specific characteristics of each country that rejected the option of a national currency in favor of a foreign currency, these countries are all united by the common mechanism of reproduction processes. These rules assume that although the country does not issue banknotes, its positive balance of payments acts as a *de facto* issuing center, extending the money supply for the development of the inner sector of the economy. This results in the dependency of those branches of the economy which are oriented to internal markets to those which are export-oriented.

Over the long term, the growth rates of the internal sector of the Abkhazian economy will be determined by 2 main factors: the growth rates of its positive balance of payments, which is expanding the economy's money supply, and the growth rates of prices in the internal sector of economy, which also depend on the condition of payment balances. In order for the internal sector of Abkhazia's economy to develop, it is necessary to increase the positive balance of payments to a level that is higher than the growth rates of prices in the economy, or by relying on foreign loans.

Because the long-term growth rates of positive balance of payments for the country cannot exceed the growth rates of its exports, a "displacement" effect of the internal sector by the export-oriented sector will be observed, and, as a result, the growth rates of the Abkhazian economy will be geared towards the growth rates of export-like operations. Therefore, to increase Abkhazia's level of social and economic potential, an active development of export-oriented production and the expansion of all fields of the economy are essential, as well as further integration into the world economy.

### **Natural Resources**

The potential of Abkhazia's economy is primarily determined by a number of resources that can be utilized in its economic development. These consist of natural resources including mineral resources such as bituminous coal, dolomites, barites, limestone, construction and facing stones (granite, marble, database parfaits); inert construction materials (crushed stone, sand); brick and clay tiles. Since Abkhazia's economy is poorly diversified and industry does not and probably will not play a dominant role in the foreseeable future, these mineral resources will most likely be underutilized in the domestic economy. But they can be exported as raw materials and provide a source of ready capital, which is so essential for the development of other sectors of the economy. However, the exploitation of these resources has to be balanced against possible damage to the environment (for example, through mining operations) and other ecological demands.

Other natural resources for developing the Abkhazian economy include its land, water, and forests. Abkhazia's total land area is 866,400 hectares, of which 421,600 hectares are UNDER agricultural production. The location of these lands in the subtropical belt allows for the development of an export-oriented agro-industrial complex specializing in processing subtropical crops. This gives Abkhazia a comparative advantage over neighboring economies in the sphere of agricultural production and the opportunity to compete in international trade. The country's water resources offer good opportunities for the development of hydroelectric energy as well meeting its agricultural

requirements with a future possibility of developing its fishing industry. Water resources, including an extended coastline, also contribute to the development of recreational activities for tourists as well as providing an attractive climate. 55% of Abkhazia is covered with forests and the total volume of available wood is estimated at 103 million cubic meters. From one perspective, these forest resources represent a major recreational factor for the development of the tourism sector and, from another point of view, they are the bases of the development of a national timber and woodworking industry. As with Abkhazia's other natural resources, coordinated planning is needed to minimize damage to its environmental assets while maximizing its industrial potential.

As discussed above, Abkhazia possesses a tremendous range of recreational resources which, when managed properly, can form the basis of a strong and competitive tourism industry. The potential is so significant that over the long term, the economic development of the country will be linked primarily to this sector.

Critical to the successful development of Abkhazia's economy are its labor resources. The Abkhazian-Georgian war of 1992-1993 was responsible for both quantitative and qualitative changes to the composition of the population. Today the viability of Abkhazia's economic development is directly impacted by these demographic changes. Reduced birth rates, high death rates, out-migration, and a lowering of the national life expectancy due to the recent social and economical crisis combined to create a significant drop in the country's workforce. This may act as one of the most serious limitations on the future development of Abkhazia's economy and will raise the question of an effective national immigration policy, which meets the requirements of its economic and national security as a whole.

### **Foreign Trade**

The availability of natural resources encourages the expansion of export-oriented sectors of the economy and integration into world economy that is needed in the absence of a national currency. Not only is the development of exports dependant on foreign economic activities, but also for increasing the volume of the Republic's money supply, which is necessary for developing the internal sectors of the economy. An illustration of this is the fact that the perceptible reanimation of Abkhazia's economy started in 1999 when restrictions on crossing the Abkhazian-Russian border and bans on exporting and importing operations were removed. Starting from that point, we can speak of resurgence in the development of the economy.

Even though Abkhazia has experienced some political difficulties in penetrating world markets, positive tendencies can be noted, leading to an anticipated growth in foreign economic activities when compared to the overall growth rates of the economy. For the period between 1999 and 2006, the average annual growth rates in the turnover of foreign trade were very high and in real numbers reached about 32% per year. This effect is mainly explained by the low starting level as well as the relaxation of economic restrictions on the Abkhazian-Russian border at the end of 1999. At the same time, growth rates in the gross production of the domestic economy were averaging 20% per year. As a result, the export quota of Abkhazia increased from 39.7% in 1999 to 62.1% in 2006. In other words, in spite of the political obstacles accompanying its integration into the world economy, the modern Abkhazian economy can be characterized as an open one. Table 4 summarizes the dynamics of the development of foreign trade turnover according to official data from the state statistics committee of Abkhazia.



**Table 4** Growth Rates of Abkhazia's Foreign Trade Turnover

Indicator	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Foreign trade turnover in mln. rubles:	40	94	118	164	508	933	918	1348	1541	1938	3341	3897
% Growth rates of foreign trade turnover by year:		139	26	39	209	84	-3	47				
Including -exports:	15	32	36	88	267	402	338	471	472	537	783	627
-imports:	25	62	82	77	242	532	582	877	1070	1400	2558	3270
Balance of payments:	-10	-30	-46	11	25	-30	-44	-406	-598	-863	-1775	-2643

Source: *Abkhazia in Numbers*. State Management of Statistics of the Republic of Abkhazia. Sukhum, 2003, p. 88.

The export sector of Abkhazia's economy is poorly diversified and reflects an emphasis on its agricultural and recreational sectors of development. Raw materials and unprocessed agricultural products represent more than 90% of all goods exported while the level of industrial production is weak and it is hardly expected to strengthen over the next few years. The service sector, which accounts for up to 60% of export revenues, is dominated by the tourism/recreational complex.

Foreign economic activity in post-Soviet Abkhazia has been developing very dynamically, but at the same time, nonlinearly. From this point of view, 4 main phases can be identified.

The first phase occurred between 1992 and 1994 when the outlines and structure of foreign economic activity in post-Soviet Abkhazia started to emerge. The economy had just started to rebuild after the destructive consequences of the armed conflict with Georgia. However, a deep crisis within the Russian economy prevented the promotion of Abkhazian exports.

The second phase took place "between 1995 to 1999" when the nature of Abkhazia's foreign economic links were under the influence of crippling economic restrictions. During this period, establishing economic relations with the Republic was banned; the exchange of goods and people's mobility were limited; in particular, citizens of the CIS were forbidden to enter Abkhazia through Russia. Due to this situation Abkhazia's foreign economic turnover decreased noticeably, and the lion's share its trade was represented by the so-called "shuttle" businesses, small-scale enterprises operated by women and teenagers, who were allowed to cross the Abkhazian-Russian border. As a result the importance of export was overtaken by agricultural production, while development of the recreational sector halted.

The third phase in Abkhazia's development of foreign economic links started in 1999 and lasted until 2003. This phase was connected to changes in Russian policy towards Abkhazia during the period of Vladimir Putin's presidency. In 1999 there was a relaxation of restrictions on the Abkhazian-Russian border; men were permitted to cross the border without difficulty, and citizens of the CIS were allowed to enter Abkhazia. Companies based in the Russian Federation were legally permitted to do business with Abkhazian counterparts. Starting from that time, the active development of modern Abkhazia's economy began.

Another factor that must be taken into account and which stimulated Abkhazia's foreign economic activity and, as a result, the national economy as a whole, was the unprecedented depreciation of the Russian ruble following the financial crisis of 1998. The subsequent devaluation effect, which led to a significant strengthening of the competitive position held by Russia on the world market, led to similar results for Abkhazia's economy as well. Thus, in spite of the preliminary shock which Abkhazia suffered due to the collapse of the Russian ruble, the devaluation considerably increased the demand of Russian consumers for Abkhazian exports. Agricultural products such as citrus fruits, nuts and

persimmons became especially competitive on the Russian market. The considerable devaluation of the Russian ruble – a reduction of 4 to 5 times of its original value – also changed the geography of Russian tourist destinations, from foreign countries to domestic resorts, particularly to the Caucasian Black Sea coast of southeastern Russia. Due to the sudden influx of tourists to the neighboring Krasnodar region, the resulting price growth stimulated a secondary flow of tourists to Abkhazia. This windfall was a powerful impetus for Abkhazia's development of foreign economic links as well as its economy as a whole.

The fourth and current phase of development started in 2003. The main distinctive feature of this period has been the legal reinforcement of permanent links between Abkhazia and Russia. In 2003 the majority of people who live in Abkhazia became Russian citizens, and the majority of retirees started receiving Russian pensions. Annual payments into the Pensioners Fund of the Russian Federation to Abkhazia now total more than 20 million US dollars per year, and as a result the Republic's economy has received an additional stimulus for its development.

During recent years, a concerted effort in developing the tourism/recreational sector has taken place. For example, approximately 2 million people visited Abkhazia in 2007, a pattern that is most likely to continue in the future.

Global interest in Abkhazia has increased recently after the announcement of the nearby Russian Black Sea resort city of Sochi as the site of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games. And despite some apprehensions, this event will undoubtedly become a significant impetus for the flow of foreign investments into Abkhazia, increasing the amount of tourism revenue and, as a result, the overall development of the economy.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the step-by-step development of a socially responsible, export-oriented economy with robust agricultural and tourism sectors must become the main goal of Abkhazia's government. It should be noted that the direction of economic development chosen by the state in the agricultural and tourism spheres will only determine the degree of development, either accelerating the formation of the new model or creating obstacles in its way. But the overall development of Abkhazia's economy will be determined by its larger regional context, the majority of which are beyond the influence of state policy.

Today it is obvious that Abkhazia has demonstrated its economic sustainability to the world community. Of course, living standards are quite low. But, there are many recognized countries where the GDP per capita of population is much lower than in Abkhazia, and the growth rates of their economies do not compare to the high growth rates of Abkhazia's economy. Moreover, in spite of all of the restrictions and obstacles of recent years, an open, export-oriented economic model – one that is actively integrating into the world economy – is emerging in Abkhazia.

Political recognition of the Republic of Abkhazia by the world community will only bolster the marked development of its economy, while increasing its opportunities to establish foreign economic links with different countries, thus contributing to the overall strengthening of peace and stability in the region.

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## **NOTES**

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## ABKHAZIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

*Maxim Gunjia*<sup>1</sup>

The dynamics of global political processes in Europe, Eurasia and Southeast Asia are accelerating. New times bring new responsibilities, obligations and requirements for the peaceful coexistence of states. The world has changed dramatically since the end of World War II and historical positions have shifted. Cooperation through contradiction became the new reality of modern international relations. Such realism in international politics is a recognized rationale for promoting policies of double standards. Idealism is confronted by pragmatism. Therefore, all countries which are transitional democracies, particularly Abkhazia, need to accept such realism and establish foreign relations with the international community based on mutual benefits. Such benefits can be fully achieved only through regional and inclusive approaches; otherwise this process may result in the miscalculation of perspectives and future strategies.

In the light of global democratic movements, some former communist and newly independent countries merely declare themselves as democratic in order to become full members of the international community. Despite massive human rights violations and unbelievable increases in levels of corruption, worsened by the growth of organized crime, these countries were well supported and a number of these quasi-states based on global geopolitical interests and political realism emerged. Unfortunately, these new "democracies" do not adhere to democratic principles in their relations with their regional neighbors or former friends from the Soviet Bloc.

Today's world is transforming towards a new system of international relations based on regional cooperation and the development of common frameworks and measures to enhance security, stability and economic growth. Without such cooperation modern countries can hardly correspond to standards of globalization and its challenges. Indeed, one can hardly name a single country which may absolutely decline present-day reality and defy the notion that future world progress growth is based on unity and the integration of markets and economies. Sovereignty as it stands for itself is no longer sufficient as a principle. Cooperation and interdependence based on respect for commonly developed and mutually respected standards represent the long-term perspective for global and regional relations.

Europe is still in transition. Countries of the former Soviet Bloc are likewise still in transition and although some have succeeded; some are still on the way. Many are confronting each other trying to detach themselves from the past and their shared communist heritage. Unfortunately for most of them, this communist heritage is still deeply rooted in their public and social administration systems.

Like everywhere in the former USSR, the transitional period for Abkhazia was ignited by the collapse of Soviet Union. Unfortunately this positive transitional process was aggravated by the severe war with Georgia in the early 1990s. Abkhazia faced strict economic blockades and embargos, non-recognition by the international community and a shattered economy based on inherited Soviet-type infrastructures. It remains extremely difficult to continue the transition and find success on the way towards democratic reforms and even to address the needs and requirements of present international political and economic standards because of the limitations of economic, political and information sanctions. Stagnation during the transitional period cutoff the country and society, resulting in an inadequate perception of the international economic processes going around Abkhazia. One of the factors affecting objective long-term comprehension of global processes is the 100-year isolation of Abkhazia from Europe and the West. Unambiguous support from the West for Georgia also contributes to Abkhazia's negative attitude towards processes of Westernization and democratization. Isolation and on-going military threats from Georgia on the one hand and the expansion of Europe on the other hand has led some scholars to believe that under such circumstances Abkhazia would function best as a buffer state, between an expanding NATO and Russia. Such a buffer role for Abkhazia not only puts it in a very fragile position; it also represents an old-fashioned strategy, which might isolate the country even further from global processes,

especially the new Black Sea cooperation. Buffer states exist only as long as they are useful to the superpowers and cannot effectively implement independent long-term policy since the wider geopolitical situation is diverse and flexible. The existence of buffer states never corresponds to long-term and stable regional development and remains completely dependent upon between superpowers.

It would be more than impractical to be Black Sea countries and exclude each other from common trade space. Some people believe that globalization and the European Union expansion is a subjective process that Abkhazia may choose to accept or decline. Whatever the attitude towards Europe, the fact is that Europe is here. It has been more than a year since a common border emerged between Abkhazia and the European Union after Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU. It is time for the European Union and Abkhazia to recognize that they are regional neighbors. Abkhazia is now on the European periphery, which is not only a geographic notion but also a new set of roles and responsibilities that Abkhazia is poised to implement in order to gain profits and to be an effective regional actor.

Indeed, Abkhazia is gradually getting absorbed into the zone of direct European interests through the enlargement of the European Union and external European borders, though not many in the EU realize it. In this situation, European interests in Abkhazia are becoming more defined, which create more possibilities for advantageous compromises among the EU, Russia, Georgia and especially Abkhazia.

Currently the European Union has no clearly articulated policy towards *de-facto* countries. However, issues of the security and stability of its external borders put Europe in a situation where exclusion of *de-facto* states from EU regional policy undermines the stability of Europe. By not recognizing Abkhazia, Europe cannot work with Abkhazia. For its part, Abkhazia's message to the European community is that it is willing to be a reliable neighbor to all of the countries of the region, including Russia, which is on track towards the 2014 Winter Olympics in nearby Sochi. When analyzing common interests, it becomes obvious that the basic interests of all of the regional actors are actually quite similar.

In ideal terms, the various Black Sea actors would implement regional policy based on an understanding of the present reality and each others' interests; this would bring compromises not only to the conflicts in the Caucasus but also to stability-related issues in the Russian South, on European maritime borders and with regards to the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). While looking for such compromises it is also important to consider and compare the mutual interests of the countries that would be involved in this dialog rather than holding on to adversarial positions.

Among the common priorities for all regional actors is stability and security on the wider borders as well as economic growth of all involved in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions. Unfortunately, there are still some political forces in countries such as Georgia that are interested in destabilizing the situation in the area in order to resolve its own internal problems and political aspirations.

The Black Sea integration strategy is an ideal platform for the mutual respect of each other's interests and is a tool through which we can achieve peace and stability, based on the Abkhaz position, which is independence from Georgia. Only through its sovereignty, is the Abkhaz nation's self-preservation and self-determination safeguarded. The other vital issue for Abkhazia is international recognition and guaranteed rights of repatriation for Abkhaz people wishing to return to the motherland. Abkhazia is not unique in protecting its statehood by prioritizing the issue of its Diaspora's repatriation; other countries have included Israel, Greece and reunified Germany. Currently, the European Union's position in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict is to support the territorial integrity of Georgia. Studying this position through the prism of the European interests it is easy to see the simplistic desire of the European Union to have fewer small independent neighbors with fragile economies and unstable political systems on the EU's periphery. Even in this time of globalization, geography still means a lot. Europe's primary interest is that countries neighboring the

EU are well governed. Neighbors involved in perpetual conflict are weak and spread organized crime and illegal trafficking, which are problems for Europe. In this context, Georgia is preferable as a neighbor and the massive financial and political investments of the European Union into Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan can be explained by Europe's intention to surround itself with security and stability, as well as to implement ideal standards for its wider "neighborhood."

Besides inculcating pan-European values, one of the main elements of the Euro-neighborhood in the South Caucasus is strengthening its strategic partnerships in the fields of energy. The EU is a major gas and oil importer and the second largest energy consumer in the world. It borders major exporters of energy including Russia, the Caspian Basin, the Middle East and North Africa. The EU's dependency on importing foreign energy has increased up to 80% during this decade. Neighboring countries serve to safeguard secure energy supplies. The South Caucasus plays an important role, as it is an energy-linking route from the Caspian Basin and Central Asia to Europe. Besides promoting greater democratic and human rights agendas, energy demands characterize European interest in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Considering the flexibility of European approaches to conflict resolution, there is room for more productive mediation efforts and facilitation of the peace initiatives and negotiations. Regretfully, the European Union's attitude towards Abkhazia is based on the Georgian perspective, which claims that Georgia is failing to be a stable EU neighbor because it is territorially disintegrated. Georgia's ability to lobby its interests in American and European political establishments is greater than Abkhazia's and so the picture that is presented of Abkhazia is as a decisive force undermining regional stability.

At the same time, Georgia is included in the framework of the "European Wider Neighborhood Policy Development Program," a program implemented by Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia and all of the Mediterranean countries except Turkey (an EU candidate), and is also a probable candidate for EU membership. By accepting Georgia, the EU will not build its strategy only on the political aspects of NATO expansion or Caspian Oil transit through the South Caucasus or the territorial integrity of Georgia. Expressing a common position towards Abkhazia, the EU and Georgia are driven by different interests. Though Georgia's membership in the European Union may become a reality within the next 15 years, the European Union is dealing with the more concrete tasks of securing its external borders.

Secured borders, stable peripheries and predictable neighbors (with judicial systems and independent courts, developed civil society and human rights protection, and economic stability), corresponding to European standards serve European interests. When the European Union sees that the recognition of Abkhazia will serve the overall stability in the region and will not threaten its neighbors, then the EU's position concerning the territorial integrity of Georgia will become more flexible as was the case with Kosovo. Indeed, an independent Republic of Abkhazia better corresponds to European interests than Abkhazia being incorporated into an unstable, militarized Georgia with its discriminatory practices towards minorities. It is obvious that the return of Abkhazia to Georgia could be achieved only through a long-lasting military operation that would result in a much longer period of regional economic stagnation. Such prospects are unacceptable for any EU politicians, even those who continue to believe in the peaceful ambitions of Georgia regarding conflicts in Abkhazia and South Osetia.

Like North Cyprus, Abkhazia directly neighbors Europe. Considering that the EU the means to cooperate with *de-facto* states, we suggest that the approaches utilized by the EU with North Cyprus could be similarly applicable to Abkhazia. Realistically speaking, this would be most probable scenario for Abkhazia and the EU over the next decade. Opening Black Sea ports to Abkhazia and developing trade relationships with all of its neighbors would be highly desirable for Abkhazia.

However, this process is not unilateral. To achieve these goals Abkhazia needs to agree upon a concrete strategy concerning the European Neighborhood Policy. All Black Sea countries are

implementing the ENP as well as Russia. Russia is the main partner of the European Union and a direct neighboring country. Russia and the EU are developing cooperation agreements and strategic partnerships in four common spheres: economy, security, education and culture. The Russian-EU dialog on energy issues dominates these relationships.

What may Abkhazia propose to Europe? By not accepting the ENP strategy, Abkhazia would exclude itself from prospective economic cooperation in the region. On the other hand, considering its unique geographic and political position, Abkhazia may become a vital economic link in the Black Sea. By accepting common trade economic and customs standards, Abkhazia would not be bound or limited by EU obligations in financial policy and could become a unique free economic zone on the EU periphery. There are countries which do not have such convenient transportation or communications systems with direct access to European markets whereas Abkhazia possesses all of the benefits of close proximity. One project to implement a Southeast Asian economic boost in Abkhazia is underway and may create new economic and financial centers in the Black Sea area. Other countries can hardly implement such a strategy since Bulgaria and Romania are in the EU, while Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are probable candidates and therefore dependant on the conditions and obligations of Euro-Atlantic memberships. Only Turkey and Russia are in the position to develop independent and favorable alternative approaches to trade.

To break through the current economic blockade and embargo we need to initiate and develop all possible means of cooperation between Abkhazia and the EU within the framework of common standards and better governance. We must give our partners a chance to trade with us legally. Considering the aspirations of Turkey regarding the European Union, Turkey may cut its small-scale economic ties with Abkhazia if the EU directs them to do so. If Abkhazia does not meet the requirements of regional cooperation, it will be affected by even stricter isolation. Cruise ships with hundreds of thousands of tourists visible on the horizon will never enter Abkhazia's seaports while the number of tourists entering through the Russian-Abkhaz border will increase up to millions of people per season jammed in long lines under the hot sun. The external window for Abkhazia will be limited to the size of its border. This will also impact repatriates returning from Turkey to Abkhazia. Although Abkhazia has the potential to respond to such challenges, there is a common mistaken perception that global processes such as the expansion of the European Union and threats from global warming are happening very far away and do not affect Abkhazia. Yet in addition to its aspirations to participate in the Black Sea economic sphere, Abkhazia in its turn may serve as a link for regional integration. More extensive integration with our brother nations of the North Caucasus will preserve political stability and serve to develop a favorable economic climate. The restoration of communications between North and South Caucasus as well as regional networks should be promoted.

For example, the Kabardino-Balkaria road restoration project over the Caucasus Mountain Range could revive more trade in the region, which would serve the interests of all of these countries. Likewise, the railroad between Russia and Armenia that goes through Abkhazia and Georgia as well as many other transnational projects would bring more stability to the Caucasus and create economic networks. However, both of these projects were halted by Georgia as part of its effort to destabilize regional trade links.

Abkhazia's growth in terms of European standards would serve the interests of its neighbors and improve its political image. What might Abkhazia contribute to Europe? This is not a rhetorical question. An independent Abkhazia is a key factor in regional stability and a link in the revival of the Caucasus' infrastructure. And surely Abkhazia has no other option but to be an equal actor in the region, adhering to European Standards for the sake of a peaceful and free Caucasus.

Abkhazia needs to undertake a number of constructive steps beginning with making a preliminary comparative analysis of the social and economic aspects of life in Abkhazia that directly relate to the implementation of the ENP. Abkhazia must make clear that it is not aspiring for membership in the

EU<sup>2</sup> but rather is going to build its relations with Europe based on the ENP.

None can blame Abkhazia for its aspirations for better standards of living and economic stability for its people and indeed such processes will hopefully be supported by the international community. Even if the EU does not provide an official action plan for Abkhazia, it may give access to its institutions, experts, and best practices in order to support the European reforms in *de-facto* countries like Abkhazia and North Cyprus.

A brief checklist of the basic areas in Abkhazia that should be developed according to European standards:

- Law (development and modernization);
- Property rights protection;
- Environmental protection;
- Agricultural improvements;
- Transparency in taxation system;
- Favorable investment climate;
- Accounting and audit systems;
- Transportation and communications.

In its effort to establish a favorable socio-economic climate in line with the ENP, Abkhazia has the opportunity to break through as “the Abkhaz Miracle,” an example for all other post-crisis countries. This will be a rational reason for the international community to recognize Abkhazia’s statehood.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Deputy Foreign Minister, Republic of Abkhazia

<sup>2</sup> Article 49 of the European Treaty reads that any European state may apply for the European membership after the candidate meets the criteria.

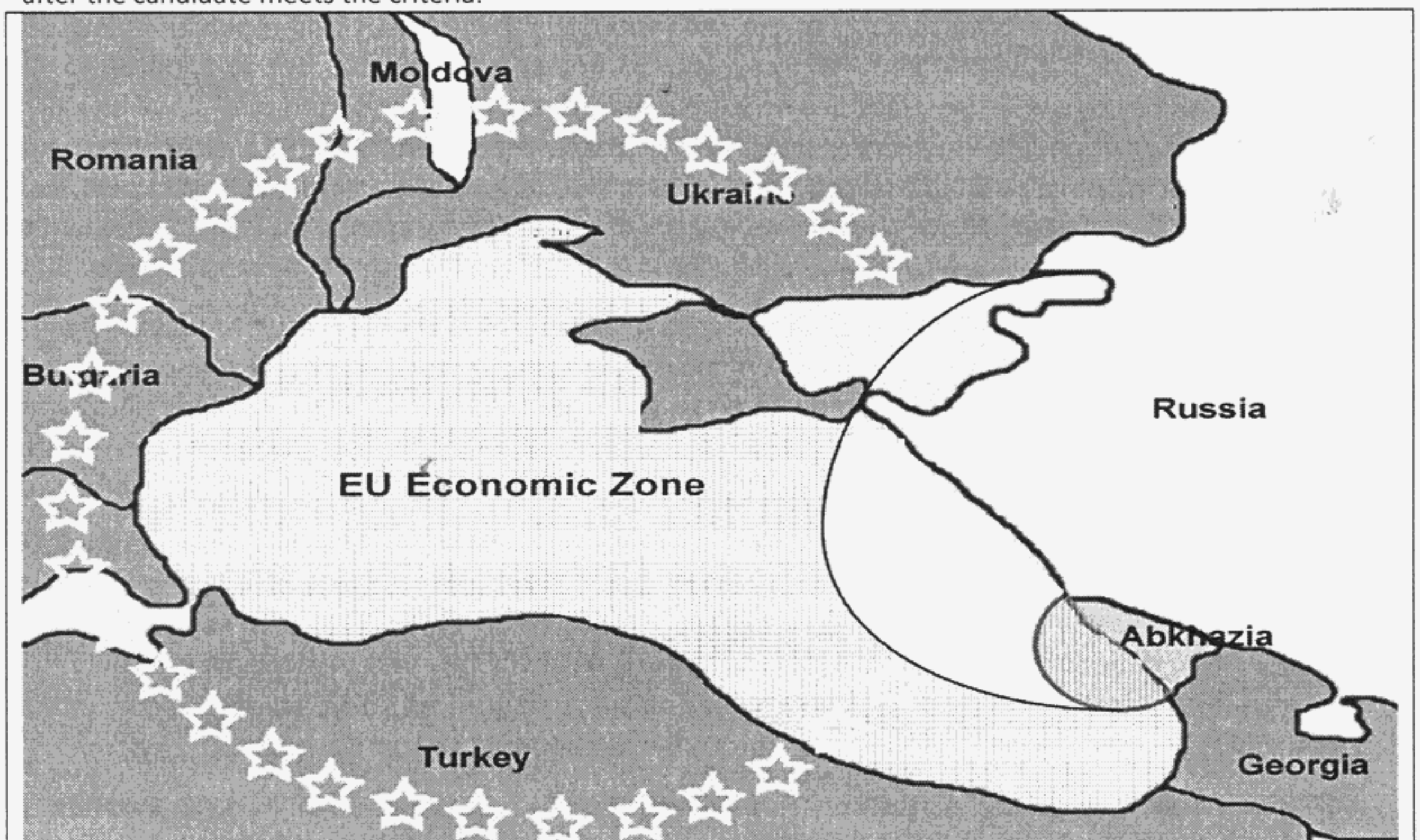


Figure 1 Map of Abkhazia in the Context of the European Union and ENP

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## **Northern Caucasian Diasporas in Turkey**



## AN OVERVIEW OF CIRCASSIAN STUDIES LITERATURE

*Zeynel Abidin Besleney*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction and Terminology

The term *Circassian* in English refers to a people of the North Caucasus whose self-designation is *Adyghe*<sup>2</sup> but who are called *Cherkess* by Russians; *Sherakese* by Arabs; and *Çerkez* or *Çerkes*<sup>3</sup> by Turks. The diverse ethnonyms for these people hint at the complexities of their history and an investigation of these terms will serve as a prelude to this study of historical and contemporary writings about the Circassian people in their homeland as well as in the Circassian Diaspora.

As the Circassians, especially the western Circassians, did not possess a centralized state, they had neither an established bureaucracy nor a written literature which would have established a more settled and permanent terminology for many features of Circassian society, culture and language – both for the Circassians themselves and for neighbouring peoples in the wider Eurasian region. Various names such as *Kasog*, *Zikh*, *Meot* and *Sind* were used to denote the proto-Circassian peoples in Greek, Roman, Latin, Georgian and Arabic records since the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>4</sup> The term *Çerkes* first appeared in 13<sup>th</sup> century Turkish and Armenian records for the Adyghe-speaking tribes of the Western and Central North Caucasus, and gained widespread use ever since.<sup>5</sup> It must be noted that since many of those travellers did not penetrate the Caucasian interior some also used the term for all the peoples of the Northern Caucasus. In addition, the exodus of almost 90% of the Circassians together with the majority of Abkhazians and smaller numbers of Ossetians, Chechens, Ingush, Karachay-Balkar and Dagestanis into the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century created a terminological confusion in Turkish records. Unable to distinguish between the members of these closely-knitted and secluded communities who wore similar clothes, spoke equally unintelligible languages, and had similar warlike manners, Turkish administrators, journalists and literary writers applied the term “*Çerkes*” to all ethnic groups who originated from the Northern Caucasus.<sup>6</sup>

It is therefore imperative to touch on this issue of terminology in order to offer a better understanding of the terms employed in this work. The first-ever North Caucasian diasporic organisation to operate in the Ottoman Empire in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Çerkes Teavun Cemiyeti* [Circassian Solidarity Society], did have *Çerkes* in its name, as its membership by and large consisted of Circassians. It was also because the majority of the elites of the other North Caucasian communities socialized, politicized and acted with the Circassian elites. Nonetheless, after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the newly emerging Turkish nationalist elite did not allow the use of ethnic names in the public domain, as the official state ideology refused to recognize the existence of non-Turkish Muslim ethnic groups in Turkey and closed down all non-Turkish Muslim minority institutions and organisations. The Turkish state acted instead to prove by every possible means the Turkish origin of minorities such as the Kurds, Circassians, Chechens, Laz, Albanians, etc. Following the end of one-party rule in the 1950s, the relative democratisation of Turkish political and social life saw the re-establishment of Circassian cultural organisations, albeit this time with the more apolitical and geographical term of *Kafkas* (the Turkish word for the Caucasus) in their titles, which was incidentally more inclusive and encompassing of the non-Circassian North Caucasian cultural groups. This state of affairs only began to change during the last years of the Soviet Union and after its collapse, which also coincided with further liberalisation of the post-Military Coup Turkey during the Turgut Ozal Administration of 1982-1989, a period that saw the proliferation of Caucasian cultural organisations all around the country. It is noteworthy that of the over 90 North Caucasian cultural organisations currently operating in Turkey, only three have the terms *Çerkes* or *Adige* in their names<sup>7</sup> although the Adyghees are numerically predominant in at least 75 of these associations.

This is in stark contrast with the practice of using “Circassian” in the names of organizations that has been very common since the 1960s and 1970s for cultural groups established by Circassian “Guest Workers” from Turkey in Western Europe, especially in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France.

An unforeseen consequence of the improvement of communications and re-establishment of contacts between the Northern Caucasus and the Chechen, Ossetian, Karachay-Balkar, Daghestani and even the Abkhaz communities in Turkey was the rediscovery of their respected autonomous ethnic identities separate from the Circassians (that is, the Adyghe) which subsequently resulted in their breaking away from the various Circassian-dominated *Kafkas* named Caucasian organisations to found their own ethnic organisations with their respective self-designations. The wars in North Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Chechnya and their coverage in the Turkish media made these names known to the wider Turkish population.

Despite these developments in the political and cultural arenas, the terminological as well as political and cultural ambiguity with regards to the term *Circassian* is still prevalent in Turkey and in the Turkish language Caucasian diaspora literature, in which there seem to be three distinct ways of conceptualising Circassianness:

1) *Circassian* is the umbrella term for all the North Caucasian diasporic communities of Turkey, whereas the term *Adyghe* refers to the ethnic group who has the self-designation Adyghe. This use dominates certain sections of the Turkish media, amongst the some members of other North Caucasian communities and amongst the believers and followers of the political ideal of North Caucasian unity. A large number of Adyghe active in social organisations also intend this meaning – the unity of the Caucasian peoples – when using the term “Circassian.”

2) *Circassian* is more narrowly a term for the Northwest Caucasian communities of the Adyghe, the Abkhaz-Abaza and the Ubykh in Turkey, who are ethnically and linguistically related to one another but are also distinct from their Northeastern Caucasian neighbours. Despite constant wavering between the first and second definitions, this usage seems to be preferred by the largest North Caucasian cultural organisation KAFFED (*Kafkas Federasyonu*, in English: Federation of Caucasian Associations), which currently has 56 member societies in Turkey dominated by Adyghe and, to a lesser degree, Abkhaz-Abaza.<sup>8</sup>

3) *Circassian* in its third manifestation harkens back to the term’s more widespread use in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and equates it with the term *Adyghe*. Throughout this work this will be the working definition for the terms *Circassian* in English and *Çerkes* in Turkish. This is supported by the fact that the majority of the members of the Ossets, Chechen, Karachay-Balkar and various Dagestani communities and their leaders are now rejecting the first and second definitions; a fact borne out by the establishment of their own ethnic institutions. What makes the use of the second definition problematic is that both in the rural as well as urban areas, such as the cities of Adapazari and Duzce, where the great majority of the Abkhaz Diaspora lives, historically the term Circassian has never been accepted in daily use by the Abkhaz and that the local Turkish community have always been aware of the distinctions between the Abkhaz and the Adyghe. The Abkhaz in those areas also broke away from the mainstream Caucasian associations and founded their own institutions with the word Abkhaz in their names. The war in Abkhazia against Georgia in 1992-1993 acted as a further catalyst for the emergence of a distinct Abkhaz identity in the Diaspora. Finally, the continued use of the term Circassian in association with the concept of Northwest Caucasianness unfortunately contributes to the

existing terminological confusion, which is certainly evident in many of the contemporary works on the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey<sup>9</sup>. Therefore in this study, the terms *Circassian* and *Çerkes* will be used interchangeably with the term *Adyghe* to denote the Adyghe-speaking or the descendants of the Adyghe-speaking population of the Northwest Caucasus.

### **Theories of Nations and Nationalism, Ethnicity, Diaspora: Concepts Definitions and Types**

In a world with arguably an unprecedented level of human mobility, research and literature on diaspora communities and migrant groups that reside outside of their perceived "homelands" have lately been growing at a phenomenal pace. While studies on the older Jewish, Armenian and Greek Diasporas had already been well established long before this new wave began, both theoretical and empirical works on more recent diasporas and migrant groups have also been flourishing, as a consequence of the increased interest in the studies of ethnicity and nationalism in recent decades.

The word "nation" is derived from the Latin word *nasci*, meaning to be born, and was initially used to denote common blood ties but was later employed in medieval universities to specify the regional origin of a student.<sup>10</sup> This dichotomy of blood and territory has resulted in a problem of definition, which has dogged the study of nations since the field's very inception. A range of features is attributed by various scholars to define a human collectivity as a nation and to distinguish it from similar groupings such as ethnic groups, tribes and religious sects. While characteristics such as having a common descent, language, religion, customs or state and a unified economy are amongst those employed by various schools of thought for the task, it seems that the significance attached to the two concepts, "self-consciousness" and "state," constitute the main dividing line between disparate definitions and conceptualisations.

The modernist school generally rejects references to the psychological, sentimental, and historical essence of the nation, and considers it a non-historic artificial concept invented by the ideology of nationalism, which itself came into existence only in post-1789 Western Europe and the United States and which was used by the newly emerged local political, commercial, academic and cultural elites as an instrument to attain power in the state. According to this approach, the attainment of a state and of "power to rule the state" is the main source of motivation that drove the nationalist ideologies that eventually created nations. Ernest Gellner, for instance, comments on Hegel's claim that "Nations may have had a long history before they finally reach their destination-that of forming themselves into states" by making the point that "the real history of a nation only begins when it acquires its own state."<sup>11</sup> "It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round,"<sup>12</sup> he adds.

For instrumentalists like Eric Hobsbawm, the nation is an invented tradition<sup>13</sup> and is purely a political creature. It is the non-aristocratic elites who, having been largely excluded from the positions of power by the monarchs and their traditional feudal allies, spot the potential for their betterment in the creation of the new state for the nation and take the lead in "the formation of nations". To Hobsbawm, even such powerful a mobilizing and binding force as language, which various scholars and nationalists alike consider as the main marker of nationality, is not what feeds nationalism, as "problems of power, status, politics and ideology and not of communication or even culture, lie at the heart of the nationalism of language."<sup>14</sup> Benedict Anderson considers nations essentially as imagined communities for the majority of would-be members of these communities can only imagine what the fellow members might look like as they do not get to meet in person all the other members of their nations in their life time. This process of imagination was facilitated by what Anderson termed print capitalism from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, that caused the spread of ideas, one of which was the idea of nationalism, in vernacular

languages in printed form.<sup>15</sup>

For Ernest Renan, “a nation is a soul and a spiritual principle,”<sup>16</sup> and as such exists independently of a “state.” Walker O’Connor considers a nation to be “a self-aware ethnic group”<sup>17</sup> with an intangible “psychological essence that joins a people and differentiates it from all other peoples in a most vital way.”<sup>18</sup> He also notes that nationhood is intimately tied to the subjective belief in common descent. Anthony Smith defines a nation as “a named human population occupying an historic territory, and sharing myths, memories, a single public culture and common rights and duties for all members.”<sup>19</sup> The ethno-symbolist school of thought, developed by Smith, draws attention to pre-modern examples of ethnic solidarity, strength of ethnic identity and ethnic mobilization to better explain the prevalence and massive appeal of nationalism in modern times. He notes that this appeal cannot only be attributed to the creativeness of elites and that surviving ethno-historic symbols and other memories of togetherness from pre-modern periods do help ethnic groups and nations to survive and re-appear time and again throughout history.

Perennialists such as Anthony Smith and John Armstrong draw attention to various human groupings in ancient history that seem to have possessed some of the features that are today attributed to nationhood. While perennialists acknowledge that nationalism is a recent phenomenon, they emphasize that nations or ethnicities existed throughout history and that abundant historical records provide evidence for the nation-like existence of ethnic groups such as Jews and Armenians.

For the aims of this chapter, the ethno-symbolist approach does help establish the connection, for instance, between the ethnic solidarity demonstrated by Circassian mercenaries in the early 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century diaspora in Egypt and the persistence of Circassian ethnic identity in various Circassian Diasporas since the 1860s. Nevertheless, it is somewhat problematic to locate the Circassians within the area of study of nations. For one, except for the Kabardian Circassians, the pre-1864 Circassian society did not have a long tradition of independent statehood, nor a standing army, nor any sizable urban centres, nor a native bourgeoisie or powerful national elites. In this sense from a modernist point of view, autonomous republics created by the Soviets in the 1920s for the various Circassian sub-groups can be considered as a starting point of some kind of nationhood, for the Adyghe, Cherkess and Kabardian nations as opposed to the creation of a single national administrative structure for the Circassian nation. However, the ethno-symbolist approach seems to offer a better explanation in terms of understanding the eventual failure of this national identity formation project and the persistence of Circassianness as a single national identity for the majority of the residents of these republics.

The term “diaspora” is derived from the Greek verb *spereo* (to sow, to scatter) and the preposition *dia* (through, apart). While for the Greeks the term referred to migration and colonization, the same term signified a more violent and traumatic dispersion through scattering for Jews, Africans, Palestinians and Armenians. The Circassians’ diasporic experience is similar to those of the latter. To this distinction between old diasporas, Robin Cohen adds the differences between the modern Irish, Indian, Chinese, Sikh and Turkish labor diasporas and the Lebanese or Jewish trading diasporas.<sup>20</sup> William Safran defines diaspora as “expatriate minority communities: a) that are dispersed from an original center to at least two peripheral places; b) that maintain a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland; c) that believe they are not fully accepted by their host country; d) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; e) that are committed to the maintenance and restoration of this homeland, and f) of which the group’s consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland.”<sup>21</sup> The modern Circassian Diaspora in Turkey seems to fit this

definition.

### **Literature on Circassians**

It is notable that academic studies on the Circassian Diaspora, which was formed in the 1860s and 1870s and of which sizeable communities totalling between 2 and 3 million are currently present in no less than ten countries, are few and far between. Although there are various reasons for this, the most critical one is that after the establishment of a national secular republic in 1923, Turkey, which is home to the largest Circassian community in the world numbering between 2 to 3 million people did not recognize a Circassian ethnic identity separate from the Turkish national identity and officially considered the Circassians and their other North Caucasian brethren as “Caucasian Turks”. The flourishing Circassian intelligentsia, formed in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, was subjected to the pressures of a nationalizing state as Circassian institutions were closed down, and remained so for nearly 40 years until the 1960s<sup>22</sup>. The Circassians in Syria experienced very similar treatment after the formation of the pan-Arab nationalist Baath regime. Therefore, despite their relative prominence in the founding days of their host states, public or academic debates on subjects such as Circassianness, Circassian identity and its transformation in Diaspora, and Circassian minority politics were banned by the state. Not only Circassian and local Turkish or Arab scholars, but Western researchers as well were subjected to various restrictions when conducting research in these countries. These limitations hampered the development of Circassian studies literature.

### **Historians of the Classical Period and the Middle Ages on Circassians**

Herodotus is one of a number of ancient Greek historians and geographers who mentioned the ancient land of Circassians when he refers to Sindia, one of the historical names of the Circassian homeland in his major book *The Histories*.<sup>23</sup> Another ancient Greek geographer, Strabo, in his *Geography* mentions the forefathers of the latter day Circassians – the Zikhs, Meots, Sinds and Kherkets – and briefly describes their country.<sup>24</sup> These early references are then followed by more descriptive accounts by the great Arab geographers: Abdul Khasan al Masudi’s *Akhbar ul Zaman*, written in 950 AD, and in Ibn Battuta’s *The Rihla*, written in 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>25</sup>. These early accounts are sufficient to locate the Circassians in time and in a certain geographical location. The first in-depth ethno-cultural analysis of the Circassians in the Middle Ages was attempted by a Genoese, Giorgio Interiano, in his short pamphlet *Della Vita de Zichi Chiamati Ciarcassi, Historia Notable* [Traditions, Ways of Life and History of Circassians]<sup>26</sup>, published in Italian in 1502, where he vividly details certain traditions and cultural practices of Circassians of that era. In addition to its descriptiveness, the significance of his work stems from the fact that, for the first time, the ancient ethnonym of “Zikh” is linked to the self-designation “Adyghe” in the same work. It is also important because Interiano declares the religious affiliation of the Circassians of that era as Christian.

### **Western Travellers, Military Officers and Agents on Pre-1864 Circassia**

Most of the existing knowledge about the state of the pre-exile Circassian society is based on the accounts, memoirs and reports of a small number of Western travellers, adventurous businessmen and government agents who visited Circassia in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The observations in their works offer insights into the structure of the Circassian society of the era, which consisted of sub-units in various stages of transition, and its simultaneously tribal, feudal and egalitarian organisation. For the aims of the present paper, the writings of David Urquhart<sup>27</sup>, Edmund Spencer<sup>28</sup>, J.S. Bell<sup>29</sup> and J. Longworth,<sup>30</sup> in particular, comprise the main sources on pre-diasporic Circassian society, including information on the role of religion, ethnic identity and attempts at creation of a national state.

The interest of Urquhart, a British diplomat based in the Ottoman capital Istanbul, in Circassia went

beyond pure diplomacy and politics as his writings in his own publications such as *The Portfolio* and *The Diplomatic Review*, and his visits to Circassia actually contributed to the shaping of many of the aforementioned political, social and ethnic processes. One example will suffice: the current Circassian national flag in the Northwest Caucasus was actually designed by Urquhart and was eagerly and swiftly accepted by the Circassians. Unlike previous travellers and geographers, who had only had short spells in Circassia, Bell and Longworth spent more than four years between them in Circassia, where they travelled, traded and lived amongst the Circassian population at a particularly significant time when the whole country was in flux as the ongoing war with Russia was gradually transforming the hitherto isolated Circassian society by forcing it to open up to new political, religious and cultural ideas. Both Bell and Longworth highlight these processes in ways that enable us to have a clearer picture of pre-exile Circassian society. In addition to their descriptions of daily lives of ordinary people and of the military and political developments of the era, Longworth's accounts of the class structure and Bell's investigation of the role of Islam and the spread of Muslim religious practices in Circassian society are invaluable contributions to Circassian studies.

Urquhart and others also revealed the arrival of Western concepts of nationalism in the region through certain members of the Circassian elite who had travelled to the Ottoman Empire, Europe and Egypt. It is through these accounts that it is possible to link the intensive cultural and political activities of an emergent powerful and influential North Caucasian diasporic elite in Turkey in the late Ottoman years to parallel processes in Circassia, which took place between 1830 and 1864, spearheaded by a Circassian socio-political elite. It may therefore be concluded that the early ethno-political activities in the Diaspora were actually the continuation of those in the homeland. Elites throughout the Circassian Diaspora were deeply engaged in the identity politics and incipient nationalism that continues, in various forms and with various factions, to the present day.

### **Circassia through the Eyes of Russian Military and Orientalism**

Another body of work on the Circassia of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was produced by those scholars, officers and travellers who were attached to or commissioned by the Russian military to carry out cultural, military, political, and ethnological research on the Caucasus. Julius Klaproth, Semen Esadze and Feodor Tornau are some of those whose names need to be mentioned. Klaproth<sup>31</sup> attempted to map out the diplomatic and military relations between the Circassians, Crimean Khanate and Russian Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. However by relying heavily on Russian official state documents, in the absence of any communications with Circassians – despite being physically present in the Caucasus at the time – his account fails to convey fully to the reader the Circassians' understanding of these diplomatic moves as well as how seriously they took the instructions and treaties discussed in these documents. While Esadze<sup>32</sup> details the military operations and related Russian diplomatic activities, Tornau<sup>33</sup> reflects on the experiences that he had while being held captive by Circassians for two years in the 1830s.

Soviet historiography's interpretation of the Kabardian Circassians' history and their relations with the Russian state since the Middle Ages was made official with the publication of *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv. Dokumenty i materialy 400-letiiu prisoedineniia Kabardy k Rossii* in 1957, when the so-called "400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Voluntary Union of Circassian People with Russia"<sup>34</sup> was ceremoniously being celebrated throughout the Northwest Caucasus. This book details exchanges of letters and diplomatic communiqués between the Kabardian nobility and the Russian administration to

prove the voluntary nature of the Circassians joining Russia. It is significant in that it demonstrates the historical transformation of the Soviet interpretation, which had constantly been altered and modified between the 1920s and 1950s. What was originally an account of Caucasian resistance to Tsarist Russia as a people's liberation war was turned into the depiction of the resistance of backward and exploitative elements within Caucasian societies to socio-cultural and economic progress and of Russia's historical role in bringing Enlightenment ideals to the peoples of Caucasus – a transformation that was almost complete by the end of 1950s. Soviet state historiography also produced the official histories of other peoples and regions of the North Caucasus, such as *Istoriia Dagestana* (1967) and *Ocherkii istorii Karachaevo-Cherkess* (1967).<sup>35</sup> These publications were likewise burdened with Soviet ideology and presented every historical development in the region from a Marxist perspective through the prism of class struggle and the exploitation of the masses by the aristocracy and religious fanaticism.

E.P. Tolmachev's article "Prisoedinenie Kavkaza k Rossii"<sup>36</sup> is a more recent example of the continuing prevalence of this school of history in post-Soviet Russian historiography. Tolmachev considers Russia to have been "forced to begin the systematic conquest of the North Caucasus"<sup>37</sup> and feels compelled to honour the Russian servicemen who took part in the military confrontation in the Caucasus, "many of whom presented worthy examples of selfless courage as they honourably discharged their duties to their fatherland."<sup>38</sup> He goes on to reiterate the by now established view that "annexation allowed the Caucasian peoples to overcome their economic backwardness, isolation and political fragmentation; it integrated them into the Russian economic system and made them part of Russian and world markets."<sup>39</sup> While today it would be a very troublesome and politically incorrect task to defend the "achievements of colonialism" in Western scholarship, as it would most certainly receive a very hostile reception from many quarters, these views, presented in an article written in 2000 and published in a publication of the Russian Historical Society, still have a wide following in Russian social science circles.

"The transformation of the conquest of the North Caucasus into a story"<sup>40</sup> is the subject of Austin Jersild's *Orientalism and Empire* in which Jersild deconstructs the Orientalist discourse of Russian Imperial ethnography on the North Caucasus frontier, including Circassia, of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He also provides insight into the emergence of the Russian-educated Circassian elites, whose members included Khan Girei and Shora Nogmov, who aspired to shine the light of Enlightenment on their people through and by the help of Russian civilisation.<sup>41</sup> The difficulties faced by Imperial Russian scholars in describing, classifying and evaluating the languages, customs and cultures of the North Caucasus as laid out in Jersild's work are curiously acknowledged by those of Soviet administrators and state commissioned scholars nearly fifty years later in the early 1920s, as we are informed by Francine Hirsch in *Empire of Nations*.<sup>42</sup> By analysing constant changes in ethnic classifications in various censuses and the creation and later amending of the borders of ethnically-based territorial homelands, Hirsch rightly points out Russia's inability to integrate the newly conquered lands with their different customs and cultures. Her well-documented explication of the creation of multiple ethnic groups from the same linguistic and cultural groups for administrative purposes is especially relevant for this paper as it helps us better grasp the current geographic, administrative and linguistic division of the Circassians in Russia into the four different ethnic classifications of Adyghe, Kabardian, Cherkess and Shapsugh.

### **Works by-Circassian Intellectuals and Researchers both in the Caucasus and the Diaspora**

The first attempt by a Circassian to write about Circassians was made in the 1840s in Russian by Shora Negomoko (Nogmov), a Circassian translator and officer in the Russian Army who had trained to be a Muslim imam. His posthumously published work *History of the Adyghe People*<sup>43</sup>, which he had originally

titled *The Circassian Legends* in its half-finished form, was hailed as the accepted reference on Circassian history by Soviet Caucasian Historiography and by latter day Circassian researchers, of both pro- and anti-Soviet persuasion, alike. Brian J. Boeck's brilliant critique of this work<sup>44</sup> and quest to understand the circumstances in which this work came to be the national history of Circassians is quite a remarkable scholarly achievement. While acknowledging its pioneering quality in the context of North Caucasian intellectual history, he rigorously examines the inconsistencies in Nogmov's work and his methodology of taking oral history and folkloric materials as actual facts. He also demonstrates very convincingly the influence of Nikolai Karamzin's *Istoriia Gosudartsva Rossiiskogo* [History of the Russian State] on Nogmov's work, which seems at times to have bordered at plagiarism. However, he also notes that Nogmov's work was incomplete because of his untimely death. Nor was it clear if he had actually intended his work to be regarded as the primary source on Circassian history, against which Broeck strongly cautions.

Early Diaspora writers in Turkey concentrated mainly on Circassian history, and in doing so were profoundly influenced by then contemporary Turkish historiography that focused on placing the Turkish nation and its history in antiquity, especially the early pre-Byzantine history of Anatolia. While this was and still is a well-established practise amongst "nation builders" and their official historians and educationists to prove the antiquity of their respective nations, yet it is all the while remarkable to observe how the cultural elites of a minority follow the academic paths laid down by the nationalist and Statist elites of their host country that actually denied them the very existence of their community's separate history and identity. *Tarihte Kafkasya* [The Caucasus in History]<sup>45</sup> by General Ismail Berkok, who served in the Ottoman Army starting in 1910 and then in the Turkish Army until he retired in 1946, is an example of this trend of Diasporic writing and is widely regarded as one of the main sources of Circassian history. Although his claims that the Hittites and the Urartians were of Circassian origin as were a number of Egyptian Pharaohs, based on similarities in their names, have now been widely discredited, the very act of publishing a history in 1953 within the socio-political context of the time is both significant and admirable. Ali Curey, a fellow Circassian officer turned amateur historian, albeit not Berkok's contemporary, followed in his footsteps by using knowledge of the Circassian language to solve the mysteries of the ancient world with the help of a rather unorthodox-methodology. He argues that the Etruscans, among other ancient civilisations whose origins are controversial, were of Circassian origin.<sup>46</sup> While the scholarly values of these and similar works produced mostly in the Diaspora by amateur researchers and community leaders are doubtful at best, they nonetheless demonstrate an understandable quest to search for a glorious national past for a nation whose current political, cultural and social state was deemed by large sectors of its intelligentsia to be a "mere shadow of its ancient past"<sup>47</sup>.

Although likewise concerned with finding links to the ancient world, Professor Namitok's *Origines Des Circassiens*<sup>48</sup> is something of an exception to the general pattern in Circassian diasporic and émigré literature.<sup>49</sup> This scholarly examination by a historian and linguist of proto-Circassian peoples'/tribes' relations with early Anatolian and ancient Greek civilisation stands as an important cornerstone in early Circassian historiography.

Yet until recently, amateur and independent researchers from within the Circassian community in Turkey produced the bulk of the works on various features of their societies. While most of these works do not meet current academic and scientific requirements and therefore must be approached and studied cautiously, their unique contribution must also be recognized for these works represent on their part the individual efforts made in the near absence of any means of formal educational and research



opportunities in Circassian Studies. These researchers made numerous financial and personal sacrifices in a very hostile social and political atmosphere to produce these works. Therefore, a new generation of scholars must express gratitude to those community researchers for keeping neglected research area alive.

The one area that is well represented in the existing literature is the national tragedy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century exile from Circassia into various parts of the Ottoman Empire. As the re-politicisation of Circassians around the world gains momentum, the research on the exile/deportation and the human cost of the defeat and exile is also on the increase. It is decidedly the most studied and relatively well-documented part of Circassian history. Circassian academics from Kabardino-Balkaria, Ali Khasumov and Khasan Khasumov, make use of the Russian military archives and publications of the era to trace the prelude to the war to the final defeat in May 1864 and the subsequent process of the deportation.<sup>50</sup> The Circassian researcher Nihat Berzeg, originally from Turkey, but a resident of Adygeya since the late 1980s, looks at the role of the Circassian aristocracy and the newly emergent Islamic clergy in Circassia of the 1840s-1850s in encouraging the masses to flee, by utilizing Russian, Turkish and British official documents and other sources on the topic.<sup>51</sup> His reliance on a variety of sources and analysis of the role of upper classes and the clergy from a non-Stalinist socialist perspective brings new understanding to the reader of the complexity of the process. Bedri Habiçoğlu<sup>52</sup> focuses on the settlement patterns of the Circassians in various parts of the Ottoman Empire.

Because of the marginalisation of the remaining Circassians in the Caucasus amongst the Slavic settlers, interest in them following their uprooting somewhat died out. The relatively diminished role of the Circassians in the short-lived political experiment of the establishment of the independent North Caucasian Republic is extensively examined in Sefer Berzeg's major two-volume work, *Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyeti 1917-1922* [North Caucasian Republic 1917-1922].<sup>53</sup>

The significant roles that were played by Circassian and other North Caucasian individuals and guerilla groups during and immediately after the Turkish national liberation war of 1919-23 on both pro and anti-Ankara sides, are explored by Muhittin Unal<sup>54</sup>. The significance of his research comes from its challenging the official Turkish historiography by exposing the political and cultural pressures that the Circassians were subjected to in the aftermath of the establishment of the new Turkish republic, which considered and labeled certain Circassian military leaders of the Turkish Liberation War as traitors. "The alleged treason of Çerkes Ethem [Ethem the Circassian], the single most important Circassian personality in the history of modern Turkey to have a direct impact on the lives of ordinary Circassians," has recently been subject to close examination, thanks to the increased liberalization of the Turkish political atmosphere.<sup>55</sup> While works by Yunus Nadi and Zeki Saruhan characterize the official Turkish historiography on the subject, books by Cemal Sener, Emrah Celasun and Cemal Kutay represent the revisionist school of recent Turkish history by blaming the early official Turkish nationalism and the state's need to write a conformist national history of Çerkes Ethem<sup>56</sup>. Another effort to locate the Circassians both as individuals and as a corporate group in the power structures and the military and political history of the late Ottoman and early republican Turkey era was made by an Armenian researcher, Arsen Avangian.<sup>57</sup> Despite the fact that his works suffer from very basic but sometimes quite significant factual errors, overgeneralizations and his over-deterministic approach to the part, he claims that Circassians as a corporate group played in the Armenian Genocide of 1915, his portrayal of the North Caucasians as a distinct ethnic group acting in the Turkish military and political settings as a corporate group with stated communal goals and ethnic solidarity is a unique contribution to Circassian and North Caucasian Diaspora studies, and has most definitely made a breakthrough towards

encouraging a wider debate within the Turkish establishment on the politicization and possible ethnic mobilization of non-Kurdish minorities within Turkey.

### **Post-Soviet Studies on Circassian Political and Cultural Identities and Diasporic Processes in the Age of Globalisation**

The works of Seteney Shami, a US-based Jordanian Circassian anthropologist, must rightly be considered as one of the pillars of modern scholarship on the ethnic identity and ethnic politics of the Circassian Diaspora. In her unpublished Ph.D. dissertation,<sup>58</sup> she analyses the institution of ethnic leadership in the Circassian community as well as the transformation of the ethnic identity of Circassian society in Jordan throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She observes the gradual weakening of the role and influence of the early Circassian ethnic leaders and notables within their own community amidst increased urbanisation and modernisation in Jordan. Her demonstration of the diverse ways that young and older Circassians dealt with issues of ethnic identity, such as the loss of their mother tongue or their newly established links with their long-lost homeland during the early 1980s, is pivotal not only for understanding the Circassian Diaspora within the context of the Jordanian state and society but also as a model for studying these dynamics elsewhere, for example, in Turkey, which went through similar processes in the 1960s and 1970s.

Despite the structural differences between the Turkish and Jordanian states – while the latter is based on a post-colonial monarchy operating in a tribal society, the former is a post-imperial secular national state founded, ironically, on the remnants of the Anatolian Ummah – Shami's analysis of the relationship between the Diaspora organizations and the Jordanian state and of the dilemmas posed, equally, by the acceptance or rejection of "minority status" within the Jordanian context also helps us in our quests to position the Circassian community in Diaspora Studies in general and in the emerging arena of ethnic politics in Turkey in particular. In "Circassian Encounters: Self as the Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus,"<sup>59</sup> she highlights the trauma caused by the stark contrasts between the homelands imagined for more than a century and the one found by those Diaspora Circassians who visited the Circassian republics in the post-Soviet Caucasus. Shami also examines the impact of globalisation on the re-emergence and diversification of Circassian identities.

The "Circassian Diaspora in Turkey: Stereotypes, Prejudices and Ethnic Relations"<sup>60</sup> by Ayhan Kaya looks at minority-majority relations in the framework of the production of the other in the Turkish context. Kaya's work is unique in revealing Circassian conceptualizations of various forms of Turkishness in different localities throughout Turkey, as well as other North Caucasians, whom Kaya considers equally to be Circassian. Being able to transcend the Circassians' conscious efforts to present to Turkish audiences a more sterilized Circassian image of Turkishness than actually exists in the community by exposing the existing stereotypes of Turks, he successfully depicts the cultural, social and political choices that the Circassians make in a Turkish dominated public sphere. Kaya's other paper, "Political Participation Strategies of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey,"<sup>61</sup> an outcome of his close liaison with one segment of the Istanbul-based North Caucasian elites, is among the first attempts to locate the Circassians' place and role in the political history of the new Turkish Republic. He then investigates, through application of institutional channeling theory, the effect of increased globalization on the political strategies that various groupings within the community employed in the Turkish political context. He successfully traces the transformation of the internal Circassian strategies, such as the Socialist Revolutionaries, the left wing *Dönüşçüler* (i.e., Returnists to the Caucasian homeland) or the right wing United Caucasianists in the conditions of pre-1980 Turkey to the acceptance of the diaspora status and pursuit of diaspora politics in the post-Military Coup Turkey of the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>62</sup>

While both works rightfully fill an important lacunae and certainly deserve a vital place in the literature, they nonetheless suffer from the widespread practice in Turkish intellectual circles of lumping together all the ethnic groups of North Caucasian origin and referring to them as "Circassians". While in most cases this exercise merely causes further terminological chaos than there already is, here the outcome is more multifaceted and directly affects the conclusions that Dr. Kaya draws through his research. Unable to recognize the different political, cultural and organizational choices that the Circassians, Chechens or Ossetians of Turkey have been making since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Dr. Kaya's failure to observe the different political strategies that these individual groups have utilized renders some of his arguments invalid. His conclusions for all the North Caucasian communities, which he refers to as the Circassians, neglect both the influence of the increased homeland-diaspora communications and the way that the events in the Caucasus affect the political strategies that the particular groups opt for in the Diasporic settings. A quick glance at the impact of the strained relations between the Circassians and Turkic speaking Karachai-Balkars in the Caucasus on their corresponding diaspora communities in Turkey, or the process of disintegration in the early 1990s of the North Caucasian cultural centers into particularistic ethnic organizations, such as the Ossetian Societies or Chechen Solidarity Associations, should facilitate a better understanding of the identity transformation that the ethnic groups of North Caucasian origin are undergoing in Turkey.

Lastly, the only comprehensive handbook in English on Circassians, *The Circassians*<sup>63</sup> is authored by a Jordanian Circassian researcher, Amjad Jaimoukha. Jaimoukha introduces the English-speaking readership to the culture, art, history and current political affairs of the Circassians. "The Circassians" is exceptional in not falling into the trap of Soviet historiography and the still present Russian ethnic classification methods, and takes on the Circassians as a single ethno-linguistic group. It is therefore strong in its coverage of the social structure, language, culture and art of the Circassians. Its detailed description of the elaborate class structure of certain Circassian tribes is especially insightful. These features easily make it one of the preliminary sources available in English. Nevertheless, the book has its problems when it comes to tackling the complexities of the political history of the Circassians as well as the current affairs of the northwestern Caucasus. The author's claim that "the modern Circassian nation emerged as a coherent coalition of kindred tribes and clans in the tenth century AD"<sup>64</sup> calls into question his definition of the concepts of modernity and nationhood. Even if one assumes that the writer is a follower of ethno-symbolism in terms of long durée of certain ethnicities in history, modernity as a concept did not come into existence until the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Furthermore, Jaimoukha is unwarrantedly liberal with the use of the term "nation" in referring to ancient tribal formations in the Northwest Caucasus, which could only be called proto-Circassians. Finally, in the area of current affairs, he is rather unscrupulous when dealing with data on demography of the Caucasus. For instance, he repeatedly exaggerates the population figures for the Circassians in the Caucasus even though reliable official figures are readily available<sup>65</sup>. These shortcomings unfortunately raise serious questions about the author's scholarly objectivity.

### **Conclusion**

Due to the increased outside interest in the North Caucasus, which is mostly due to the War in Chechnya and the broadening instability into the other parts of the Caucasus thereof, the region is relatively better known in comparison to the pre-1989 era. Since more funding and academic encouragement is being channelled into the study of the peoples of this region, the literature on Circassians has also been steadily expanding in the past decade. Hitherto overlooked subjects such as the complex class structure of pre-1864 Circassian society and the ethno-nationalist character of the Circassian resistance

movements of the 1830s and 1860s as opposed to the religious character of the other resistance movement of the era in the region, Muridism (which Western scholarship sometimes fails to distinguish), will no doubt make a significant contribution to their relevant disciplines.

In terms of Diaspora Studies, the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey provides us with empirical tools to enhance our understanding of the impacts of globalisation on transnational communities including the unprecedented use of virtual space for the construction of a global national platform in the absence of a shared, national language. It is only through the increased participation of Western scholarship that the hegemony of the equally biased Russian and Turkish historiographies on the area of North Caucasian Studies, of which Circassian studies are a part, will be broken.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

<sup>2</sup> There is not an established spelling rule in English for the Circassian self-designation. Of the various ways of spelling the word, such as Adyge, Adyghe, Adygean, Adygean or Adyg, Adyghe will be used in this work as it seems to offer the closest sound in English for Адыге.

<sup>3</sup> Using the letter “s” instead of “z” is a conscious attempt by Circassian Diaspora intellectuals to reject the Turkish perception and definition of being a Circassian with all its connotations, including beautiful Circassian women in Ottoman harems; Circassian slavery, and rebellions by certain Circassian communities during the Turkish Liberation War of 1919-22. By de-turkifying the term, they aim to offer an alternative definition of Circassianness that is constructed by Circassians, independently of the Turkish state and society at large.

<sup>4</sup> Arsen Avangyan, *Osmanli Imp. ve Kemalist Turkiye'nin Devlet-Iktidar Sisteminde Cerkesler*, İstanbul: Belge Yayinlari, 2004, pp. 14-15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Amjad Jaimokha, *The Circassians*, London: Curzon Press, 2001, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> These include an association opened in the Spring of 2007 in the town of Yalova, which also has a Daghestani Society; a new society called “Adyghe Society” was founded in the early 2008 in the northern town of Samsun; and an association called “Caucasian Society” in a small town called Inegol, which also hosts a separate Abkhaz Society, changed its name to “Inegol Caucasian-Adyghe Society” in October 2008, an unprecedented change.

<sup>8</sup> It must be said that in the pamphlet *Biz Cerkesler!* [We, Circassians!], published by the KAFFED with the support of EU funds to introduce the North Caucasians to political and diplomatic circles in Ankara, the definition of “Circassianness” is the one that includes all North Caucasian ethnic groups. However, protests from members of non-Adyghe and Abkhaz ethnic groups about their representation as “Circassian” forced KAFFED to acknowledge “mistakes” upon which they did not elaborate. In practice, KAFFED’s projects only involve the three Circassian republics and Abkhazia. It is a member of the World Circassian Association but is not a member of any other umbrella organisation for any other North Caucasian organisation based in the Caucasus. The first and longest serving president of KAFFED, Muhittin Unal, was an Abkhaz-Abaza who was bilingual in Abkhaz-Abaza and Circassian languages.

<sup>9</sup> A typical example would be the article by Ayhan Kaya titled “Circassian Diaspora in Turkey,” which is included in the Bibliography, where he acknowledges the various uses of the term Circassian, which he considers both literally to mean Adyghes and as a mega-identification including the other North Caucasian “co-ethnic tribes”. According to him, the Chechens and the Abkhaz are tribes of the Circassians alongside with other Adyghe tribes of Shapsough and Kabardians. He uses words from Circassian/Adyghe language such as “*tlhepagh*” for purely Circassian/Adyghe concepts while clearly these terms and concepts either do not exist or exist in different forms in the Chechen and/or Abkhaz communities. His application of his chosen terminology has important flaws and certainly carries the risk of full or partial misrepresentation of many socio-cultural and political features of various North Caucasian communities in Turkey.

<sup>10</sup> Walker Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a ...,” in *Nationalism*, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 38.

- <sup>11</sup> Ernest Gellner, Nationalism and High Cultures, in *Nationalism*, John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.63.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.
- <sup>13</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 13.
- <sup>14</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990, p. 111.
- <sup>15</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso, 1991, p. 37.
- <sup>16</sup> From Ernest Renan's lecture titled "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation" as quoted in Hans Kohn, *Nationalism, Its Meaning and History*, New York: Von Nostrand, 1955, p. 135.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- <sup>19</sup> Anthony D. Smith, Dating the Nation, in Daniele Conversi (ed.), *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World*, London: Routledge, 2004, p.65.
- <sup>20</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London: University College of London Press, 1997, p. ix.
- <sup>21</sup> William Safran, Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return, in *Diaspora* 1:1(Spring 1991), 83-84.
- <sup>22</sup> In addition to the closure of the Circassian Solidarity Society, the society's educational establishment, "Çerkes Örnek Okulu" [Circassian Exemplary School], where the Circassian language was the language of instruction and whose graduates were groomed to become members of the future Circassian diaspora elite, was closed down on 11th September 1923, three weeks after the signing of the Lausanne Treaty, on which the legal foundation of the new republic was based. During the negotiations, Lord Curzon's request to give the Circassians, alongside the non-Muslim Armenians, Greeks and Jews, an official status as an ethnic minority was rejected by the chief negotiator of the Turkish delegation, İsmet İnönü, who would become the second president of Turkey after Kemal Atatürk and who incidentally was the main antagonist of Çerkes Ethem before the latter's flight to Jordan. For further information on the subject, see Elmas Zeynep Aksoy, *Çerkes Teavün Cemiyeti* [Circassian Solidarity Association], Istanbul: Toplumsal Tarih, 112 (2003), 100-106.
- <sup>23</sup> Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus*, trans. by George Rawlinson, 440 B.C.E, Book IV, 1858-1860.
- <sup>24</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, trans. by H.L. Jones, Volume II, Book XI, London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1928, pp. 191-247, quoted in Aydın Ö Erkan, *Tarih Boyunca Kafkasya* [The Caucasus throughout History], Istanbul: CiviyaZilari, 1999, p.188.
- <sup>25</sup> Aydın Ö Erkan, *Tarih Boyunca Kafkasya* [The Caucasus throughout History], Istanbul: CiviyaZilari, 1999, pp.28-29.
- <sup>26</sup> Giorgio Interiano, *Della vita de Zychi chiamati Ciarcassi, Historia Notable* [Traditions, Way of Life and History of Circassians], Venice, 1502. An original copy of the pamphlet can be found at the British Library in London.
- <sup>27</sup> David Urquhart, *Turkey and Its Resources*, London: Saunders and Otley, 1833. He later published and wrote for *The Portfolio* and *The Diplomatic Review* between 1835 and 1865, publishing in the former the Declaration of Circassian Independence in 1835.
- <sup>28</sup> Edmund Spencer, *Travels in Circassia, Krim-Tartary, etc.*, 2 Vols., London: Henry Colburn, 1839.
- <sup>29</sup> J. S. Bell, *Journal of a Residence in Circassia in the Years 1837, 1838, 1839*, 2 Vols., London: Edward Moxon, 1840.
- <sup>30</sup> J. A. Longworth, *A Year Among the Circassians*, 2 Vols., London: Henry Colburn, 1840.
- <sup>31</sup> Julius von Klaproth, *Travels in the Caucasus and Georgia performed in the years 1807 and 1808 by Command of Russian Government*, London: Henry Colburn, 1814, pp.173-214.
- <sup>32</sup> Seman Esadze, *Çerkesya'nın Ruslar Tarafından İsgali* [Russian Occupation of Circassia], trans. from Russian into Turkish by Murat Papsu, Ankara: Kaf-Der Yayınları, 1999.
- <sup>33</sup> F. F. Tornau, *Bir Rus Subayı'nın Kafkasya Anıları* [A Russian Officer's Caucasian Memoirs], trans. from Russian into Turkish by Keriman Vurdem, Ankara: Kaf-Der Yayınları, 1999.
- <sup>34</sup> *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv. Dokumenty i materialy 400-letiiu prisoedineniia Kabardy k Rossii*, Moscow, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1957.
- <sup>35</sup> For a detailed debate on this subject, see Michael Khodarkovsky, Of Christianity, Enlightenment and Colonialism: Russia in the North Caucasus, 1550-1800, in *The Journal of Modern History*, 71:2 (1999), 394-430.
- <sup>36</sup> E.P. Tolmachev, *Prisoedinenie Kavkaza k Rossii*, in *Sbornik Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva*, O.M. Rapov

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(ed.), Moscow 2000, p.215.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217

<sup>40</sup> Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>42</sup> Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Şora Negomoko (Nogmov), *Istoriia Adigskogo Naroda* [History of the Adyghe People], trans. as *Adige-Çerkes Tarihi* from Russian through Arabic into Turkish by Vasfi Gusar, Istanbul, 1979.

<sup>44</sup> Brian Boeck, Probing Parity Between History and Oral Tradition: Putting Shora Nogmov's History of the Adyghe People in its Place, in *Central Asian Survey*, 1998, 17:2 (1998), 319-336.

<sup>45</sup> Ismail Berkok, *Tarihçe Kafkasya* [The Caucasus in History], Istanbul: Istanbul Matbaasi, 1953.

<sup>46</sup> Ali Cüreç, *Sozcuklerin Tanıklığında Çerkes Tarihi* [Circassian History through the Witness of Words], Istanbul: Chiviyazıları Yayınevi, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>48</sup> Aytek Namitok, *Origines des Circassiens* [The Origin of Circassians], trans. into Turkish by Aysel Çeviker, Ankara: Kafkas Derneği Yayınları, 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Although Professor Namitok was preoccupied with trying to establish links between proto-Circassians and other well-known civilizations of antiquity, his works are certainly in compliance with academic standards. North Caucasian Émigré literature was formed by the founders of the short lived independent state of North Caucasian Republic of 1918-21, who upon the collapse of their government went to exile first in Czechoslovakia, and then Poland and Germany where they published the journal *Promethe*. Following the end of the World War II, the majority of them settled in Turkey.

<sup>50</sup> Ali Kasumov and Khasan Kasumov, *Genosid Adigov, iz istorii borbi adigov za nevazisimost v 19 veke*, trans. into Turkish by Orhan Uravelli as *Çerkes Soykırımı* [Circassian Genocide], Ankara: Kafder Yayınları, 1995.

<sup>51</sup> Nihat Berzeg, *Gerçek Nedenleriyle Çerkes Sürgunu* [The Mass Deportation of the Circassians and its Real Reasons], Ankara: Takav Matbaasi, 1996.

<sup>52</sup> Bedri Habicoglu, *Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Gocler* [Migrations from the Caucasus to Anatolia], Istanbul: Nart Yayıncılık, 1993.

<sup>53</sup> Sefer Berzeg, *Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyeti 1917-1922* [The North Caucasian Republic], 2 Vols., Istanbul: Birlesik Kafkas Derneği Yayınları, 2003-2004.

<sup>54</sup> Muhittin Unal, *Kurtulus Savasi'nda Çerkeslerin Rolu* [Circassians' Role in the Turkish Liberation War], Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1996.

<sup>55</sup> Çerkes Ethem is indisputably the most controversial military figure of the Turkish Liberation War. He successfully led a Circassian guerrilla group in Western Turkey against the Greek Army in the early stages of the War but later fell out with Kemal Atatürk and was forced to flee through Greek lines. He eventually settled in Jordan where he died in 1948 amongst the local Circassian community, rejecting the Turkish Government's offer of amnesty in 1935. He was mentioned as "Çerkes Ethem, the national traitor!" in all history books at all levels in Turkish schools until 2004, when all mentions of ethnic affiliations were banned in the public sphere. Many Circassians have been subjected to mockery and abuse at schools, including the present writer, and in the military service. A high profile campaign organized by a Circassian Society is currently underway in Turkey to re-write his role in the official history books and to demand his exoneration. Circassians themselves have issues with Çerkes Ethem as he is deemed to have needlessly shed Circassian blood and causing intra-Circassian fighting when he put down two Circassian and Abkhaz led rebellions against the Ankara Government in the cities of Adapazari and Duzce in 1920. He put down another rebellion led by another Circassian officer of the Ottoman Army, Ahmed Anzaur, earlier in the same year. Anzaur's forces were also made up largely of Circassians. Despite the fact that throughout this rebellion ethnic difference between the Circassians and the Turks in the region were pronounced quite publicly, Circassian intellectuals do not criticize Çerkes Ethem for being heavy handed towards Anzaur.

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<sup>56</sup> See the Bibliography for a full list of books on the subject.

<sup>57</sup> Arsen Avagian, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sistemi'nde: Çerkesler* [The Circassians in the State and Political Power Structure of the Ottoman and Kemalist Turkey], İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Seteney Shami, *Ethnicity and Leadership: The Circassians in Jordan*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 1982.

<sup>59</sup> Seteney Shami, Circassian Encounters: Self as the Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus, in *Development and Change*, 29:4 (1998), 617-646.

<sup>60</sup> Ayhan Kaya, Circassian Diaspora in Turkey: Stereotypes, Prejudices and Ethnic Relations in *Representations of the Others, in the Mediterranean World and their Impact on the Region*, Nedret Kuran-Burçoğlu and S. G. Miller (eds.), İstanbul: The ISIS Press, 2005, pp. 217-240

<sup>61</sup> Ayhan Kaya, "Political Participation Strategies of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey," in *Mediterranean Politics*, 9:2 (Summer 2004), 221-239.

<sup>62</sup> Socialist Revolutionary Circassians were those who believed in the 1970s that a Socialist revolution, which would bring cultural freedoms and liberate Circassian identity, in Turkey was imminent and that the Circassians' best interests were served by being in solidarity with other peoples of Turkey rather than returning to the Caucasus. Donusculer (Returnists) were activists who socialized in community associations and argued for unconditional return to the socialist homeland. Birleşik Kafkasyacılar (United Caucasianists) were on the right of the Turkish political spectrum of the era and gathered in İstanbul-based associations such as Şamil Vakfı and Kuzey Kafkasyalılar Derneği. They argued that the homeland, the North Caucasus, was under Communist Russian occupation and therefore not to be returned to before communism was overthrown.

<sup>63</sup> Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians*, London: Curzon Press, 2001.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> Jaimoukha gives the figures of 80,000 and 150,000 for the number of Circassians in the Republics of Karacai-Cherkessia and Adygeya respectively while the actual figures are approximately 50,000 and 113,000 according to the 2002 All-Russia Census.

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# SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE RE-ENCOUNTER WITH THE "HOMELAND" ON THE PRODUCTION OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE: A CASE OF CIRCASSIANS IN TURKEY<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

In this paper, I discuss the transformation of local knowledge among Circassians in Turkey resulting from their re-encounter with their "homeland" in the Northwest Caucasus. This is partly a response to the growing literature on the relationship between international migration and knowledge (Williams 2005),<sup>3</sup> which in turn affects the relationship between "home" and "homeland" (Al-Ali and Koser 2002). The point I want to raise is that revived connections with the Caucasus, made possible in the late 1980s as a result of *Perestroika* and the collapse of the Soviet Union that followed, have affected the production of knowledge among diasporic Circassians in Turkey. This observation seems to apply to the groups inhabiting rural Anatolia, as well as to Circassian intellectuals in urban centres. Hereafter, I use the term "Circassians" in a broad sense, to denote descendants of all the Muslim refugees forced to leave their historical territory in the Northwest Caucasus and settle in Anatolia in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>4</sup> I gathered the majority of the materials presented below during my anthropological research in the Uzunyayla plateau region of Central Anatolia from September 1997 to April 1999, which were supplemented by those collected in my brief revisit to the region in June-July 2004.

## Overview of My Doctoral Research

I will begin by describing my doctoral research in order to show how an anthropological project on rural Circassians in Turkey was framed in the 1990s, and how ethnographic knowledge about them was constructed. In my Ph.D. dissertation, *Memory Politics: Circassians of Uzunyayla, Turkey* (2004), I discussed some struggles over social and historical knowledge among Turkish citizens of Circassian origin in the Uzunyayla highland. Uzunyayla is a plateau, belonging to Pınarbaşı district of the Kayseri province in Central Turkey. It is approximately 50 km in diameter, stretching 1,550 to 1,630 meters above sea level. It was one of the major locations for Circassian resettlement in Anatolia after their forced migration from their traditional territory in the Northwest Caucasus resulting from Russia's military conquest of the region, completed in 1864.<sup>5</sup>

Initially, 73 Circassian villages were founded there, which included 60 Adiga villages (45 Kabardian villages, 13 Hatuqwey villages, and two Abzakh villages),<sup>6</sup> nine Abkhaz/Abaza villages (eight Ashkharywa villages and a Tapanta village), three Chechen villages, and a Karachay village (though Chechens and Karachay Turks are usually not regarded as Circassians). There are currently 51 Adiga villages (36 Kabardian villages, thirteen Hatuqwey village, and two Abzakh villages), four Abkhaz/Abaza villages (three Ashkharywa villages and a Tapanta village) and a Karachay village in the part of Uzunyayla within the boundary of Pınarbaşı district.<sup>7</sup> Also, Chechens share one village with Kabardians. There are in total roughly ten thousand Circassian inhabitants in Uzunyayla (eight thousand in these villages, and another two thousand in the district town of Pınarbaşı).<sup>8</sup> I conducted one-and-a-half-years of fieldwork there.

When I started my research, I did not have the idea of the politics of memory in mind as the subject of my dissertation. Rather, this subject grew naturally out of the difficult experiences that I had during my fieldwork. I would like to elaborate on this point, since my experiences may be useful for future scholars. I believe the "confessional tale" (van Maanen 1988) that I am going to tell in this paper is relevant especially for those scholars planning to do long-term ethnographic research on Circassians in a rural setting. They will need to negotiate their face-to-face relations with their local "interlocutors" on an everyday basis. This practice may significantly affect the outcome of their research, as will be seen below in my case.

I did my Master's degree in London in 1992-1993 and wrote a modest thesis on the relationship between nationalism and Islam in Turkey, under the supervision of Professor Paul Stirling who founded Turkish anthropology in Britain with his classic monograph *Turkish Village* (Stirling 1965). Then, I went to Turkey to learn Turkish, as well as to find an appropriate subject for my doctoral research. I worked in Erciyes University in Kayseri, teaching Japanese for two years (1994-96). I learned about the Circassians in Uzunyayla, and decided to focus on them. Studying a minority ethnic group seemed a natural development from my interest in Turkish nationalism.

I started to visit Circassian culture associations in Kayseri, Ankara and Istanbul, meeting these organizations' committed nationalist activists as well as younger members, including many university students. From what I heard in these associations, I understood this little-studied people as follows: historically, Circassians (especially, Adiga here) were divided into four clearly demarcated status groups, which association members often likened to "caste" (*kast*), namely, "princes (*psha*<sup>2</sup>)," "nobles (*vorq*)," "commoners (*tlkhotl*)," and "slaves (*pshatle* and *unaut*);" many Circassians are still guided by this hierarchical mentality – usually described as "feudal" (*feodal*) by these association members, who are often leftists – and consequently are unable to unite among themselves. This causes serious problems, especially in Uzunyayla, where marriage across different status groups is usually not tolerated; there, young men and women who want to marry across traditional family statuses would elope (i.e., to run away together to marry), knowing their marriage would not be approved by their parents.

I returned to London in 1996 and started my doctoral studies. I spent a year to prepare for a field project researching ethnicity, gender and marriage among Circassians in Uzunyayla. I was planning to elucidate social changes by analysing many different cases of elopements (*kız kaçırma*) across different types of social boundaries (ethnic, economic, as well as traditional family status). Not only is marriage a classical subject of British social anthropology, it is also a safe subject when applying for a research visa. I wanted to avoid politically sensitive issues, since I was going to live in Turkey among an ethnic minority in a nation state with a strong assimilation policy for its non-Turkish populations. I did not want these people to encounter any serious problems with authority due to my research on them, and my obtaining official government permission was one of the necessary conditions for the success of my research. Fortunately, my application was accepted after a long period of anxiety.<sup>10</sup>

I started my fieldwork in Uzunyayla in September 1997. My plan was to live in a village, doing participant-observations, just like many British anthropologists in the past, whose works tended to be on a small-scale community, which they often regarded and presented as a clearly bounded micro cosmos. The Pınarbaşı branch of the Ankara-based Caucasus Association (*Kafkas Derneği*), which opened earlier in 1997,<sup>11</sup> recommended a Kabardian village in the middle of Uzunyayla to me. I will call the village Üçyol (not its real name). Üçyol was one of the largest, most affluent, and most populous Circassian villages in the region and it allowed easy access to both Pınarbaşı and remoter villages in Uzunyayla. Üçyol looked like an ideal location, though it was in reality a small village of roughly 280 Circassian inhabitants living in 69 households.<sup>12</sup> As soon as I settled there, I started to inquire after the basic facts of the village, i.e., the families who lived there and their history, regarding these "data" as a mere foundation for the research on different aspects of marriage that I intended to do in the village. As I visited all the families, I was looking for the traditional informants of social anthropology, i.e., knowledgeable elders, who could tell me everything about the village.

Then, I encountered a problem. To my dismay, many people in the village did not want to talk about their family history. Actually, many elders did not know much about their grandfathers, partly because almost an entire generation of male villagers was lost during World War I (1914-18) and the Turkish Struggle for Independence (1919-23) that followed.<sup>13</sup> As for marriage, people often did not know from which families their male ancestors and relatives had taken their wives, and to which families they had given their women. Their typical answers were like "Ahmet in Village A" or

"Mehmet of Village B," and they did not know either the Turkish family names or Circassian lineage (*lhepkh/sülale*) names of these men.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, it was impossible to reconstruct marital history of most families since their re-settlement in Uzunyayla in the 1860s, at least, without my visiting all Circassian villages in the district. This ignorance about and, even more significantly indifference toward the families with whom they have exchanged women in the last four or five generations, seemed meaningful. It was all the more so, given the importance placed on the choice of marriage partners among local Circassians, about which I repeatedly heard from Circassians in Pınarbaşı and urban centres before I started my research in the village.

I spent one year in Üçyol, listening to people talk about the poverty after World War I, Land Reform in the 1950s, some grave impacts of structural adjustment policy taken since the mid-1980s on local agriculture, and the difficulties of raising sheep and growing grains in the cold highland climate. I also learned much about wedding parties from young men in the village, and about their ambiguous relationships with the girls they met in these parties. But I never could overcome people's silence about particular aspects of the past, and I moved to the town of Pınarbaşı after that year with a strong sense of disappointment, feeling that my research in the village had failed.

I extended my research for six months, which I spent in Pınarbaşı.<sup>15</sup> I tried to see as many *vorg* (i.e., descendants of former noble families) elders living in the town as possible.<sup>16</sup> I also visited almost 40 Circassian (mostly Kabardian and Abaza) villages in Uzunyayla, in addition to Kayseri, Ankara and Istanbul, to meet these privileged speakers (see below). Elders (usually men, but not always) of known *vorg* families talked passionately about the local history. The contrast between their articulacy and the silence prevalent in Üçyol was simply striking. My research proceeded remarkably smoothly. These *vorg* elders said it was unfortunate for me to have settled in Üçyol. According to them, Üçyol was a "slave village" (*kajer kwaje*), since most of its families were of former slave origin,<sup>17</sup> unable to speak about their family history.<sup>18</sup>

I spent the rest of my research listening to the stories freely and enthusiastically given by those *vorg* elders. I came to share these *vorg* elders' attitude toward those people whom they regarded as "slave descendants" by the time I left the region in April 1999. I confess that I developed a sense of condescension toward those people of Üçyol, who, though certainly hospitable, had not necessarily been very helpful for my research on their past, based on my now viewing many of them as "slave descendants." I left the region, thinking that I would never return.

I met another and equally overwhelming difficulty once I returned to London. It took five full years (1999-2004) to write my dissertation after my field research was completed. Surely, the main reason was that my research did not go as originally planned, as has sometimes been the case with many anthropology graduate students returning from field research. I was at a loss, unable to fix the subject of my dissertation. In response to my accounts of my own difficult research experiences in the village, my supervisor said, "Eiji, nobody goes to a village and settles there without studying it carefully beforehand," which is perhaps a lesson assumed to be too simple and self-evident to be mentioned in the year-long research methods class that I had taken before the field work.

I also faced an ethical problem. Should I treat those people who kindly let me live in their village and talked to me about their lives as the lower status descendants of slaves, as many *vorgs* looked upon them? Should I simply conclude that they could not talk about history since they did not have a past to talk about? I was feeling very ashamed about the fact that I left the region with a sense of prejudice and resentment towards those good people. I wanted to do my best to do justice to these people with whom I shared many joys and sorrows of life in their village, and to avoid becoming an agent in imposing silence on them through my work. However, I had difficulty finding an appropriate ethnographic narrative (Emerson, Frets and Shaw 1995) into which my research materials as well as my personal experiences in the field could be placed in an orderly way, to represent more accurately their social world than was represented in *vorg* discourse.

It was only after three years that I could start writing a dissertation in its final form. I was able to overcome the trauma of my difficult experiences as the social and political aspects of memories were discussed increasingly in both the social sciences and the humanities (Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickam 1992). The fact that “forgetting” became a subject for investigation on its own was very helpful for me (Mines and Weiss 1997; Forty and Küchler 1999). Previously, historical consciousness expressed by means of oral testimonies (Tonkin 1992), commemorative ceremonies (Gilles 1996), museum exhibitions (McEchern 1998), artefacts (Bahloul 1996; Slyomovics 1998), and everyday practices (Zonabend 1984; Sutton 1998) were investigated as articulate memories. More recently, increased attention has been given to silence with the insight that what is not talked about also has a story (Swedenburg 1995; Antze and Lambek 1996; Sider and Smiths 1997).

My writing of my doctoral dissertation paralleled this new development in academia. I struggled with my field notes again and again, and found that “forgetting” in Üçyol certainly had its own story. I found that the untold story had value. When I was convinced that the “silence” among many people in the village could be re-evaluated positively, I thought, for the first time, that I could perhaps apply the term “slave descendants” in my thesis, when appropriate, to current members of families regarded as having descended from bondsmen and subordinate persons of various types.

My dissertation findings can be summarized as follows. There was a competition for prestige and authority between people belonging to different status groups among Circassians in Uzunyayla and in Üçyol in particular. On the one hand, *vorqs* attempted to play dominant roles among local Circassians. They did so in part by controlling the production of local knowledge, often in the form of articulating a version of “history” in which they could claim prestige and honour. On the other hand, descendants of former slaves resisted this attempt. Social memories were produced along this social division, now reduced to a simple binary opposition, at least, at a conceptual level.<sup>19</sup> Certainly, slave descendants were not able to relate history freely. Nonetheless, they created positive experiences for themselves through various strategies of forgetting. Silence about history on one level may be interpreted as slave descendants’ attempt to accommodate themselves to the *vorqs*’ dominant discourse of local history. On another level, however, there is a more active engagement with forgetting, which is a resistance aimed at dislocating that *vorq* history, with some success. Accommodation and resistance are two different facets of slave descendants’ everyday practice of memory (see de Certeau 1984: 82-88).<sup>20</sup>

Through formulating this ethnographic narrative for my thesis, I gradually worked through my painful personal experience. It was not until after I finished my doctorate that I could revisit Uzunyayla. It took five years for me to come to terms with my own memories of feeling frustrated and then ashamed. But that was 2004. And this is 2009. What more can I draw from my fieldwork experiences?

### **Impacts on Local Knowledge in Uzunyayla**

In the following section, I would like to examine one of the issues that was not discussed in my dissertation. It is a question about some effects upon local knowledge as a result of the re-encounter with the Northwest Caucasus after the late 1980s. Various new types of knowledge have been brought back to Turkey by Circassians who are now able to travel much more freely than in the past to their historical lands in the Caucasus. In Uzunyayla, this new development has made it much easier for some people (including the youth as well as slave descendants) whose opinions were previously devalued and disregarded to oppose the traditional and authoritative local knowledge.

Circassians in other parts of Turkey (especially active members of cultural associations in urban centres, who are often moderate leftists) see the Circassians in Uzunyayla as a conservative group. The Circassians in this remote highland region, highly isolated in the past, are often said to care excessively about traditional status distinctions. My observations fit well with their perceptions. The

local vorqs still claim to be the traditional elites among the local Circassians, regardless of how much influence they actually have. Many factors can be given to explain this conservative attitude.<sup>21</sup>

As mentioned above, the history that the vorqs recount is based on the binary opposition between vorqs and slaves (and their descendants), and historical significance is attributed to the long-standing antagonism between these two groups. Instead of focusing on the details of this story,<sup>22</sup> I would like to describe briefly part of the mechanism by which the vorqs' narrative is legitimised and made into the authoritative version of history. Vorqs claim that only they can relate local history and those people whose names they gave to me as knowledgeable persons are indeed elders from well-known vorg families. These elders say that they learned history in their fathers' guestrooms (xasa or oda) when they were young while serving their fathers and their guests. They are "rightful speakers" (söz sahibi) endowed with the "right of speech" (söz hakkı) in valued public space (social gatherings in vorqs' guestrooms).<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, vorqs say that slave descendants don't know history or cannot recite real history even if they know it. For vorqs, slave descendants are not worth listening to. Vorqs say that they will silence slave descendants by saying to them "From which family are you?" (Kimlerdensin? or Xetxe Washish?) to remind them of their genealogy, in case they forget their lowly social status and behave inappropriately (e.g., telling their own version of history) in public space.

Thus, vorqs define the privileged "knower"/"teller" of history, the significant "theme" of history, as well as the public "space" and social occasions in which this history is recounted. Slave descendants experience difficulties in telling their stories freely in this social environment, and vorqs for their part suffer from an inability to listen attentively to slave descendants' voices. Through this discourse, vorqs attempt to control the production of historical knowledge, so that they can monopolise high status and authority in a version of history that they alone can relate. Here, history is made into an artefact of cultural heritage that only vorqs own, or a symbolic resource that only they can deploy for their advantage.

What needs to be emphasised is the fact that the silence of slave descendants does not exist only in the realm of this vorg discourse; their silence is actually observable in everyday life. I was present on an occasion when a university student from a family in Üçyol became badly disconcerted by the question "Kimlerdensin?" casually mentioned by a Kurdish elder (the headman of the only Kurdish village in the district, who had stayed in Üçyol as a shepherd), while drinking tea in the bus terminal of the district town. The young man replied, mentioning the name of the master lineage his ancestors had served, "We are the T..., too. But our lineage is lost." Knowing what it meant, the Kurdish man dropped the subject. I cannot be sure if vorqs really asked the question of slave descendants with an intention to silence them in public, but the latter seemed familiar with this process of verbal humiliation. A local Kabardian man in his forties talked about the psychological effects of asking such questions of slave descendants, regardless of the motivation, in the following words:

When slaves are asked for their family [i.e., lineage] name, they say, "I am from such-and-such a family," making up a name that nobody in the region has heard before. Or they remain silent, unable to answer the question, and people understand what it means. Or they admit that they don't have a lineage. I witness such cases very often. Slaves develop an "inferiority complex" [kompleks], as they are frequently asked from which family they are. Therefore, it is natural that they become extremely boastful when they have made some wealth. They do so especially when they employ five, six people.

Also, when I was visiting elders of well-known vorg families in other villages, I sometimes saw some other men keeping silent throughout my conversation with the elders. Similarly, knowledgeable vorqs who were answering my questions often did not ask others sitting at the same dining table

about what they knew. Later, I was told that these men were neighbours from ex-slave families. They appeared to have an existence of a different quality, though present at the site of knowledge production. The slave descendants' knowledge was neither asked for nor recounted and was not written down in my notebook, although it is also certain that their presence, though mute, affected what the vorg elder said to me.

However, this self-regulating *status quo* mechanism has recently been destabilised due to the revitalized connection with the Northwest Caucasus. A new set of knowledge is being used as an instrument for challenging previously authoritative knowledge, the production of which has traditionally been monopolised by vorg elders. I will share some episodes, which brought this point home to me.

From the perspective of diasporic Circassians in Turkey, Circassians in the Caucasus are often seen as having overcome their quasi-feudal consciousness owing to their socialist education, in which the previously deprived section of society are given the role of historical winners in class struggle. I often heard from both those who have been to the Northwest Caucasus as well as those who have not been that it is common there to greet each other, casually saying "Xetxe Warey?" (or *Kimlerinsin?* i.e., "Whose are you?"), which is to inquire the name of the vorg family from which one (or more precisely one's ancestor) was freed. It makes a sharp contrast to Circassians in Uzunyayla who say "*Kimlerdensin?*" to remind slave descendents of their past and thus silence them.

In the first of my examples, I was visiting an older man in his late sixties (b. 1931) in one of the Uzunyaylan Kabardian villages. He was from a well-known vorg family and was known as one of the most knowledgeable people in Uzunyayla, having served as one of the main informants for a Kabardian folklorist who visited Uzunyayla in 1997. He was still keenly concerned with differences in social status. According to him,

Slaves in this village cannot attend social gatherings. They cannot sit with guest girls visiting the village. They can serve guests in vorgs' guestroom, but they cannot sit at the table. They cannot sit in the upper seats (*yukarı*). They cannot sit with elders during an engagement ceremony.

He told me about his family's emigration to Anatolia, about the formation of his village, as well as about the other families who settled in his village. While I was interviewing him, one of his sons was serving us. The father who still looked at him as a carefree youth, introduced him to me as "a twenty-year old boy." Cumhuri (pseudonym, b. 1970), was actually a 27-year old young man. He had recently visited his older brother in Nalchik (the capital of Kabardino-Balkarian Republic in the Russian Federation) for eight months, and was returning there in a few days. Cumhuri frequently interrupted his father to correct or refute what he was telling me. For instance, when his father, talking about the "landlord" family after which his village was named,<sup>24</sup> said, "They are vorg," Cumhuri interrupted his father, saying "They are mentioned as psha [i.e., a princely family] in books that I saw in the Caucasus! On what grounds do you say they are mere vorg?" In return, when Cumhuri was giving me the names of the first three Kabardian families about whom he learned in the Caucasus, his father, who was already contradicted by his son, interrupted him, saying "The three highest-ranking Kabardian families are A..., B..., and C...." The son asked, "From whom did you hear that story?" The father replied,

I learned history by listening to one thousand people. I learned it in my youth serving guests at the door (*kapı*) of my father's guestroom until one o'clock in the morning without sitting once. The young people of today like my son would collapse on the floor, if they stayed on their feet for one hour!

Cumhuri, however, challenged the credibility of his father's knowledge, by saying sharply to him "It is only hearsay!" and argued that what he learned in the Caucasus was the true history of Circassians.<sup>25</sup>

This is one of several incidents of the same kind that I witnessed. It is obvious that young people can now challenge the monopoly of local knowledge by elders (usually, elders of vorg families).

Many Uzunyaylalis (including both people living in Uzunyayla and people born there but currently living outside it, plus their offspring) have been to the Northwest Caucasus, including students, researchers, businessmen, imams, volunteer soldiers, as well as tourists who just wanted to see their ancestral land, taking advantage of cheap flights then available for around 250 Euros roundtrip. Take the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic, for instance, although it is difficult to determine their exact number. I can provide an estimate obtained from a Kabardian man (b. 1964) from Uzunyayla, an electronic technician who returned to Nalchik for good and set up his own business in 2006. According to him, there are 1800 Circassians who have permanently returned to the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic from various diasporas.<sup>26</sup> This includes 450-500 returnees from Turkey, of whom 250 are Uzunyaylalis (mostly, Kabardians) like himself. These numbers include only repatriates, excluding those who have merely visited there for touristic or commercial purposes.<sup>27</sup>

It would not be an exaggeration to say that perhaps around five times more Uzunyaylalis (approximately 1000-1500 people) have at least made a short visit to their ancestral lands in various part of the Northwest Caucasus. A number of people have stayed there for some years, and some have even married there. All these Uzunyaylalis have brought back new sets of ideas, which they have been disseminating to other Uzunyaylalis. This new social knowledge has provided them – including many people whose opinions were not previously valued – with authority derived from an “authenticity” associated with first-hand experience of the “homeland,” where Circassians have their “roots” (*kökler*) in opposition to the “Diaspora” associated with temporariness and shallowness.<sup>28</sup>

Now, let me go back to Üçyol, and present a different example from there to further elaborate on this subject. Many of the families of Üçyol have a family member who has been to various parts of the Northwest Caucasus. My guess is that around fifty *Üçyollus* (people of Üçyol, living in or outside the village) have been to the Northwest Caucasus, mixing with different kinds of people, including their remote relatives (namely, descendants of family members left in the Caucasus after the mass emigration to Turkey).<sup>29</sup> For instance, a man in Üçyol (b. 1965) in his late thirties, who had lived in Nalchik for some time staying with his brother, gave me the following account in 2004, when I asked him and his father (1928-2006) for their reaction to their family’s reputation as a former slave family, a very important issue that I could hardly explore in my primary research in the village years before (1997-99).

No Circassians can say ‘We are vorgs.’ They can’t say ‘We are slaves,’ either. I saw a book displaying 450 different family emblems while I was in the Caucasus.<sup>30</sup> Do you know the origin of these emblems? These emblems were given to those Circassians captured and enslaved by the Crimean Khanate when they attacked the Caucasus in their military expeditions. Thus, only slaves have emblems. Vorgs don’t have emblems. We don’t have an emblem.

Family emblems are usually highly valued by local vorgs as the real proof of their nobility, but here their social power is inverted and they are represented as tokens of slave origin by a youngish man of a family that does not have one, who drew on his personal experiences in the Caucasus.<sup>31</sup>

So what can be learned from these two episodes? First, this new set of knowledge brought from the North Caucasus is used to undermine the dominant mode of reproducing traditional local knowledge. People who belonged to diverse social categories (e.g., youth, slave descendants) that were traditionally “muted” (Ardener 1975) and unable to articulate their voices, are now able to challenge the claims made by the traditionally privileged speakers (elders, vorgs, and especially vorg elders), drawing on the authority of “authentic” knowledge brought from the Circassian “homeland.” Second, it appears that history in the Caucasus is valued at least on a number of occasions more than the



diasporic history that subsequently unfolded in different locations, which includes the local history of Circassians in Uzunyayla. It is likely that Circassian national history will be regarded more widely and more often as a more important subject of discussion in Uzunyayla than this local history in the near future.

### **Impacts on Local Knowledge among Circassian Intellectuals in Urban Centres**

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to explore, although very briefly, how the re-encounter with the Caucasus has been affecting the knowledge of educated Circassians in the urban centres of Turkey, including the many graduate students in Turkish universities (including an increasing number of women students) who are doing research in the Caucasus, or on different aspects of Circassians in Turkey. This fact in itself is a new development. Previously, the Turkish government was not supportive of students of Circassian origin studying about the Caucasus and Circassian diaspora in Turkey. Two Master's theses in sociology on Circassians in Turkey, both submitted by students of Circassian origin at the beginning of the 1990s, are probably the first academic works from Turkish universities which have the term Circassians (*Çerkes*) in their respective titles as a name of specific ethnic group of non-Turkish origin.<sup>32</sup> This is significant, since research subjects of all graduate students in Turkey need to be approved by the Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu*), as a result of the centralization of education in Turkey that followed the 1980 military coup.

As promising as this new development is, I am apprehensive about a possible cleavage developing between the research of this new generation of young scholars and the wealth of materials published by nationalist members of various cultural organisations of Circassians over the last 100 years. *The Bibliography of the Caucasus and Circassians*, published by S. E. Berzeg in 1996, lists 436 different books and 63 separate periodicals all published in Turkey, mostly by authors of various Caucasian origins (including those from the Northeast Caucasus e.g., Chechens, Ossetians, Dagastanis, as well as groups from the Northwest Caucasus). These published materials touch on many different subjects concerning history, society and culture of many different groups in the western as well as eastern parts of the North Caucasus. Many more have surely been published since. If these earlier materials are closely analysed, we can learn about the diverse histories written by Circassians as well as the shifting construction of Circassian identity/identities in Turkey, which are fascinating subjects. However, I think it is unlikely for these kinds of investigations to be considered meaningful by the state, which still attempts to control academic works through educational institutions at various levels, encouraging students to work on particular subjects through funding while discouraging (though not to say prohibiting) them from studying other subjects.<sup>33</sup> This may result in an unfortunate neglect of these topics in the knowledge production of Circassian intellectuals in urban centres.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have drawn attention to two different aspects of the transformation of local knowledge among Circassians in Turkey that has resulted from their re-established relationship with the Caucasus: namely, on the one hand, a clash between a wealth of traditional knowledge (*vorg* discourse) and a new sets of ideas brought from the Northwest Caucasus and deployed in interpersonal politics, leading to a negotiation for a new local knowledge among rural Circassians in Uzunyayla; and, on the other hand, a growing discontinuity among urban educated Circassians between a century-long accumulation of traditional knowledge published usually to be consumed within the narrow ethnic market, and newly emerging academic knowledge on the Caucasus and Circassian diasporas intended for a different type of readership. To conclude, Circassians' "home" in Turkey in general, and in Uzunyayla in particular, has lost some of its former symbolic weight in its relations with their "homeland" in the Caucasus, as more and more people travel between them.

One of the major consequences of the renewed contact with the Northwest Caucasus seems to have

been a democratisation of the production of local knowledge in which more men (and increasingly more women, at least among students) can participate to raise their own voices, often by recounting their own versions of history. However, this change has come with a cost of a depreciation of local knowledge in various forms. And if a silence of a certain section of Circassians (whether rural or urban) is still observable, the mechanisms that serve to reproduce their silence also need to be investigated.

#### **Appendix: A Conversation with Cumhuri in 2004**

I visited the Kayseri Caucasus Association (a member organization of Kaf-Fed) when I returned to Turkey in 2004. I found Cumhuri (now a 34-year-old man) selling tea in the association. I reminded him of how our previous meeting in 1998 developed, and asked him why he continuously interrupted his father, trying to correct or refute what his father was telling me. Cumhuri, who remembered it well, answered:

People in Uzunyayla are conservative, and, especially, my father is a hardliner (*çok katı*). It is not a pleasant thing. The most important element in Circassian culture is respect for people, but people here are contentious. It is a remnant of feudalism (*feodalilik*). At the foundation of our weakness lies the *vorg*/slave problem. Circassian slaves started to revolt before the French revolution. Many *vorgs* and folks (*vatandaş*) were killed because of this in the last 150 years. Kazanokha Jebago [a historical person of a Kabardian *slave* origin, known to have systematised Circassian customary laws in the classic period] said “Nobilities lies, not in one’s blood, but in one’s spirit.” Anybody who is acting in accordance to our traditions and customs is a full Circassian regardless of his origin. No Circassian, including my father, can say, “I am a good Circassian.” Understanding things with a prejudice is not healthy. Nobody can monopolise Circassianness (*Adigagha*, the total of proper social relations among Circassians framed in accordance with *Adiga xabze*, their traditional manners of conduct). Whatever is appropriate in each occasion are Circassian manners, as Jebago said. We still need a Jebago.

I wanted him to elaborate on how he perceived the differences between what is said in Uzunyayla (i.e., *vorg* discourse) and what he learned in the Northwest Caucasus. Thereupon, a Kabardian man in his early sixties, who had been working for many years in the association office, interrupted us and said something sharply in Kabardian, knowing that I do not understand the language. Cumhuri, sitting with me at a small table in the garden, became so uneasy about talking to me. I asked him what happened, and he said, “I cannot speak to you when this older man (*amca*) is around.” I leaned from him that the man said to him “Don’t speak about ‘Circassianness’ while seniors (*büyükler*) are present,” reproducing a common understanding that elders who know better are rightful speakers, entitled to represent Circassians. I said to Cumhuri, “You revolted against elders years ago, and now they are getting their revenge on you for it.” He smiled and left the table. I was disappointed because I missed a good opportunity to learn what young generations of local Circassians who have been to the Caucasus are thinking about what they hear in Uzunyayla (fortunately, I later found a chance to speak to Cumhuri again, though briefly).

I looked around for the “elders” whose presence deprived Cumhuri of an opportunity to raise his voice, and I could see only two other men in the same garden. I did not realise that they came in and sat at a table in the other corner. They were drinking tea, speaking in Kabardian. One of them was a Kabardian man in his mid fifties, in a highly prestigious occupation, and I found that he was a former president of the association. He served in the early 1990s before I came to Kayseri to work in 1994, and I never had a chance to see him before, though I had certainly heard of his name. Another man was a Kabardian man from Nalchik, who had been staying in Kayseri for a few years, although he was unable to speak Turkish. I introduced myself to them, and mentioned my newly completed Ph.D.

research on history and culture among Circassians in Uzunyayla. The former president's reaction was not something I was prepared for:

I don't have any interest in knowledge in Uzunyayla. I have learned from this guest from the Caucasus that what are said about Circassians in Uzunyayla and knowledge given to us there about Circassian history is all untrue. It is a good thing that I did not want to learn. It is a good thing that I don't know anything.

I tried other topics as he did not appear willing to elaborate on this, but I could not succeed to make him talk in length on any of the subjects that I raised. It may be simply that I was unskilful at interviewing him, but the lack of sympathy that the former president of a local Circassian cultural association demonstrated toward local Circassian culture and tradition was puzzling for me, given that he was a local person, born in a village in Uzunyayla.

I went to Üçyol a few days later. In the village, I had a chance to stay overnight with a friend of mine (b. 1974), from a well-known vorg family in the village. He was in the village during my primary research there. Actually, he returned to the village just before my research started in 1997, after quitting school due to his previous commitment with leftist political activities that put him in jail. At that time, he often expressed to me a strong feeling of displacement caused by his inability to readjust himself to the life in the village, in which he was seen as a troublesome, atheistic "communist" (*kömunist*). I was happy to learn in 2004 that he had enrolled at a highly regarded university in Ankara as a mature student. He was helping his wealthy father in his farm in summer holiday. He, who stayed outside the village for many years, was informative of developments in the Kayseri association. I told him that I met the former president before I came to the village. His comment was as follows:

He is such a strange man. He is from a slave family. He has developed a strong "inferiority complex." He cannot speak to vorgs at all. He is extremely uncomfortable in the presence of some elders of reputed vorg families. He simply cannot sit with them. He once called for a meeting to discuss some issues during his presidency, and invited many knowledgeable elders. He could not, however, present himself to chair the meeting, since many vorgs were coming. He phoned from somewhere outside and said that he could not come. It was he who called for the meeting. He was born to a slave family of a highly reputed vorg family. His ancestor did not settle with his master's family and went to a different village after their migration to Uzunyayla. He did not know this family history, believing that his family and his ancestor's master's family are of one and the same vorg lineage. He knew all his life that he was vorg. You know the elderly man from his former master's family, who was a lawyer. The former president addressed to this old man as "unaqhuesh" (my relative) one day. The elderly man was shocked by this, and told him the real story. The former president could no longer speak to him. He is still so uncomfortable in vorgs' presence. He is always going out with the man from Nalchik in the last few years. This man is also strange. He always says, "You need to shatter your way of thinking," when people say something to him. These two men are getting along so well with each other. They cannot communicate with other people. They are indeed strange.

The former president's unexpectedly hostile reaction against local culture and knowledge in Uzunyayla, which left me confused given his previous commitments to organize local Circassians, now made a perfect sense, though the truthfulness of the story that my young friend told me is not by any means verified, including the slave heritage of the former president's family.

The original episode of my meeting Cumhur at his father's house in a Uzunyaylan village in 1998 and this anecdote of my re-encountering him in a Kayseri association in 2004, taken together, vividly demonstrate the difficulty in deciding whose voice should be listened to among Circassians in

Uzunyayla. An elderly man of a reputed *vorq* family, who is known to be a knowledgeable person in the “home” of local Circassians, but is criticised by his young son for the unreliability of his knowledge? Or a youngish man who has certainly learned some alternative knowledge and ideas in the Circassian “homeland,” but is nonetheless not allowed to talk about Circassians in local public space? Or a “gatekeeper” of local knowledge, who was always friendly and hospitable to a foreign researcher (I have known him well since 1995), but who nonetheless sometimes tried to manipulate the knowledge given to him? Or a senior member of a Circassian cultural association who prefers to defer to a man from the “homeland” who, in turn, is determined to alter the way local Circassians think in their own “home”? Or a young man with a university education who is from a wealthy Üçyol *vorq* family, but nonetheless is encountering difficulties making his own place in the village? Or many people in his village, who see and present themselves as good Circassians struggling to observe local traditions in such occasions as wedding and funerals, but who often fail to convince *vorqs* that they are good enough Circassians in terms of their historical status?

There is no longer one social category of local people that can be regarded as the “rightful speakers” among Circassians of Uzunyayla in an age in which more people travel across geographical, socio-cultural, political boundaries than ever before in the Republican era. And there is no single authoritative and thus “correct” version that effectively serves as the dominant discourse. In such an emerging state of multi-vocality, it is important to record all of these diversifying knowledges and different narratives recounted by different actors in Uzunyayla, and to figure out the increasingly complex relations between them, without presupposing the presence of a single dominant discourse supported by a process of hegemony formation. First, researchers need to discern who are doing the acts of speaking; that is, researchers need to know who are saying what, to whom, in what occasion, for what purpose, as well as what resources they rely on to authorise their arguments, and analyse their accounts in the light of such crisscrossing factors as their age, gender, traditional statuses, economic conditions, educational levels, political ideologies, locations (birth and residence), and the level of contacts with the “homeland” in the Caucasus. It is important to examine what kinds of identification are made in these narratives, and what sorts of social boundaries are created to exclude certain sections of local people from various social groupings (Circassians or otherwise), denying their legitimate membership to these groups.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> My trip to Abkhazia was funded partly by the Social Science Research Council (New York, USA) and by the Caucasus Business and Development Network (Turkey and Abkhazia); I gratefully acknowledge both.

<sup>2</sup> Visiting Fellow, Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan.

<sup>3</sup> See also Miyazawa (2009), which discusses the same subject matter, but with different materials and emphasises.

<sup>4</sup> I am highly aware of the problem of this inclusive use of the term “Circassians” (*Çerkes/Çerkez*), which was originally used for Adiga. Different groups from the Northwest Caucasus in Turkey (e.g., Adiga, Abkhaz/Abaza, and Ubykh) see themselves, and are seen, as belonging to this social category to different degrees in different contexts. Still, I use the term in this broad sense in this paper, since it reflects the local usage in Uzunyayla, in which identification with the category is fully accepted by its dominant groups (Aдыгас and Abazas), in part because inter-ethnic marriages have long been common among them.

<sup>5</sup> In an earlier article (Miyazawa 2006), I compared some different narratives of Circassians’ resistance to Russia’s military expansion and their migration to Anatolia given by different actors (academic scholars, nationalist members of Circassian cultural associations in urban Turkey, and rural Circassians in Uzunyayla).

<sup>6</sup> These Adiga sub-groups speak different dialects and, historically, they had different kinds of social organization.

<sup>7</sup> A dozen Circassian villages in parts of Uzunyayla belonging to different districts of Sivas Province are not counted here. Also, five of these 73 original villages have already changed hands and are now occupied by either Sunni Turks (Avşars or Türkmen) or Alevi Kurds.

<sup>8</sup> According to the Kayseri Caucasus Association, another twenty-five to forty thousand Circassians are living in the provincial town of Kayseri (its total current population is sixty thousand).

<sup>9</sup> Hereafter, I underline Adigean (i.e., Kabardian) words to distinguish them from Turkish words.

<sup>10</sup> A British anthropologist, who had research experience in Turkey and was highly informative about its

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bureaucratic procedures, told me that a research proposal even on gender would not be approved by the Turkish authorities, to say nothing of a research proposal on ethnicity.

<sup>11</sup> The branch became defunct in 2003 when the Caucasus Association was replaced by the Federation of Caucasus Associations (*Kafkas Dernekleri Federasyonu* [hereafter, "Kaf-Fed"]) to form a more effective pressure group in both national and international arenas. Kaf-Fed is strengthening the effectiveness of an organization that represents urban, middleclass Circassians, but in the process is disregarding the voices and needs of rural Circassians.

<sup>12</sup> The village also featured three households of Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria who settled in the village in 1953.

<sup>13</sup> Approximately one hundred men from Üçyol were killed and only three men returned alive, each severely wounded.

<sup>14</sup> *Vorqs* distinguish two different types of extended families, *lhepkh* and *unaqhue*. *Lhepkh* is a "lineage" (*sülale*) firmly "rooted" (*köklü*) in the historical Caucasus. Conceptually, only *vorqs* have an *lhepkh*, though slave descendants may form a shallow *unaqhue* (an extended family), though in fact these terms are used interchangeably in everyday life.

<sup>15</sup> I actually lived in the district town of Pınarbaşı for a year (1995-96) while I was working in Kayseri. I basically spent all weekends in the town. Therefore, I already had strong ties with many local people (Turks, Circassians, and Alevi Kurds) when I started my research in 1997.

<sup>16</sup> "*Vorq*" is a fuzzy and contested social category which is highly heterogeneous in composition. Namely, *vorq* families include 1) "landlord" families which founded the villages named after them in Uzunyayla; 2) families of influential people whose social standing received the state recognition by the Ottomans in the form of official titles (see note 21 below); 3) in-laws of these two types of prestigious families, who have exchanged girls with them as a token of a mutual recognition; and 4) many other known families, whose members strongly claim themselves to be *vorqs*, including in fact most freeborn "commoner" families. No matter how heterogeneous in composition, these *vorq* families are usually distinguished from descendants of former slaves by having a family (i.e., lineage) name brought from the Caucasus. Also, see note 19 below.

<sup>17</sup> At least, 35 of the current 69 households in Üçyol are looked upon by local *vorqs* as former slave families. In the village census book, first completed in 1321 (1903/04), 29 *gulam* (male slaves), eight *mafevk* (freed male slaves) and two *cariye* (female slaves) are registered, in addition to one *bey*, for some 130 households. Most of these male slaves and freed male slaves were married with families. Nearly forty percent of 153 people mentioned as having born in the Caucasus were of some subordinate statuses. Note that I understand *mafevk* here as referring to the same category of people as *matuk* does in the census book of an Ashkharywa village, though *mafevk* literally means "the one that is above."

<sup>18</sup> Just like *vorqs* (see note 16), "slaves" in Uzunyayla is a fuzzy and contested social category which is highly heterogeneous in composition. Former "slaves" here consist of diverse kinds of bonded or subordinate people (more precisely, the descendants of these people), who include; 1) those enslaved in the pre-migration Caucasus; 2) the serfs, who were recognised as "slaves" upon landing at the points of entrance to Ottoman territories, by the Ottoman state; 3) freed slaves, who were manumitted either before or after migration; 4) impoverished freeborn people, who were illegally enslaved during the confusion of mass migration and settlement, including many children who were sold off by their destitute parents; and 5) many freeborn agricultural labourers in poverty, regarded by *vorqs* as no different from actual slaves. For the diverse ways in which many exhausted Circassians were illegally enslaved during the chaos of their mass migration to and resettlement in Anatolia, see Toledano (2007: 95, 102, 126).

<sup>19</sup> The prevalent social dichotomy between "*vorqs*" and "slave descendants" (see notes 16 and 18 above) disregards both "princely" families and "commoner" families. Most princely families who settled in Uzunyayla have already died out, or disappeared from the region, or have become so impoverished that they are unable to make their presence felt in any way among local Circassians. For instance, when I wanted to visit a man of a *psha* family in a local village, the Circassian taxi driver whom I hired in the town for the day trip did not know the family. On the other hand, current members of "commoner" families usually claim *vorq* status for their families. Saying that someone has a humble "commoner" origin would always be taken as an insult, since "Nowadays everybody says 'We are *vorq*,'" as many locals cynically observe.

<sup>20</sup> For further analysis of this topic, see my discussion on *vorqs*' "politics of memory", and slave descendants' "practice of memory," in Miyazawa (2007b).

<sup>21</sup> The fact that difference in traditional statuses is still pursued in Uzunyayla can be accounted for by diverse factors: 1) The most numerous group in the region, Kabardians, is a powerful sub-group of Adiga (known as "aristocratic Adiga") that dominated the North Caucasus from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century; 2) Most of the immigration and settlement in Uzunyayla (1859-62) predated the forced mass emigration of 1864. The major groups in Uzunyayla were able to travel in an orderly manner, and the powerful families could bring their possessions (including slaves) with them. Kabardians, Hatuqeys and Ashkharywa Abazas freely founded separate clusters of villages close to each other in Uzunyayla, which served as a great advantage for the

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reproduction of their traditional social structure; 3) The Ottoman government adopted a policy of incorporating elite Circassians into the local administration, to secure their assistance in executing some policies oriented toward this large migrant group. The government gave official military, civil, and religious titles (*bey, ağa, efendi, kadi, mula*), to local Circassian leaders, and registered their bondsmen of different kinds as “slaves”, thereby approving the traditional ranks. The power of leading families was maintained, also because Uzunyayla became one of the major sources of female slaves (*cariye*) for Istanbul harems; and 4) a change of social consciousness may have been slower in Uzunyayla, because the region was highly isolated in the past, far away from the provincial centre of Kayseri (see Miyazawa 2004).

<sup>22</sup> For more substantive discussions on *vorq* history, see Miyazawa (2008c; 2008d). In Miyazawa 2008c, I also examined different memories given by different categories of *Üçyollu* (non-*vorqs*, wealthy slave descendants, and impoverished slave descendants) about Land Reform (distribution of state lands to landless people) in the 1950s. In Miyazawa 2008d, I analysed social memory of a series of meetings held in the 1960s-70s by local Circassians to reduce the amount of money transferred as bridewealth, examining oral accounts given by local *vorqs*, and by both wealthy and impoverished slave descendants of *Üçyol*.

<sup>23</sup> The *vorqs*' guestroom here should be understood as a metaphor of the local “*vorq* society” (*vorq toplumu*), which *vorqs* in turn often equate with the local “Circassian society” (*Çerkes toplumu*).

<sup>24</sup> For the contested meanings attached to Circassian names of local Circassian villages, see Miyazawa (2007a; 2008b). This contested quality of Circassian place names has a significant consequence on the symbolic process of reproducing Circassians' “homeland” in Uzunyayla, also referred to as “Little Caucasus” (*Küçük Kafkasya*).

<sup>25</sup> For an interesting (and personally disturbing) anecdote of this episode, see the Appendix.

<sup>26</sup> Repatriation of Circassians in Syria and Jordan started earlier, partly because these two countries had better relations with the Soviet Union than Turkey did.

<sup>27</sup> According to Kaf-Fed, roughly 350 Circassians from Turkey have settled in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, and 250 Circassians from Turkey have settled in Maykop, the capital of Adigea Republic (Cumhur Bal, the general coordinator of Kaf-Fed, personal communication). According to an estimate that I obtained during my visit in Abkhazia in October-November 2007, around 150 Abkhazians/Abazas (including some Adiga) from Turkey are currently living in Abkhazia, some of whom have married local women and established families there.

<sup>28</sup> In Miyazawa 2008a, I examined the opposing meanings given to the “diasporicity” of Circassians in Turkey by different sets of actors, including a Turkish nationalist group in Pınarbaşı district who have a claim for Uzunyayla as their historical territory, educated nationalists of Circassian culture associations, and rural Circassians in Uzunyayla.

<sup>29</sup> Only a few cases are given here to shed light on the diversity of ways in which people of *Üçyol* travelled to the Northwest Caucasus: 1) An *Üçyollu* man (1943-92) was among the first Circassians in Turkey who visited Nalchik in 1988. He went back to Nalchik to settle in 1992 when he retired, though he died there two months later. 2) A young man of *Üçyol* (b. 1971) was among some dozens of diasporic Circassians in Turkey who fought in the Georgia-Abkhazia Conflict (1992-93) and the first Russia-Chechnya Conflict (1994-96) as volunteers. He is now in business with his brother (b. 1973), based in the Caucasus. 3) Another *Üçyollu* man (1951-2003) started hotel management in Nalchik, though he, too, died soon. 4) Another man from the village, working in Nalchik, married there, and invited his father (b. 1930) living in *Üçyol* for a visit. 5) Two brothers, both architects, after regularly visited the Caucasus since 1995, opened an office in Nalchik in 2007. Further research on this subject is planned.

<sup>30</sup> Having family emblems (*damga/tamqa*), together with having a village named after one's family in Uzunyayla (as the founder and landlord of the village), are usually regarded as real proof of one's nobility. For a collection of some 150 emblems used by *vorq* families mostly in Uzunyayla, see L. Kosswig (1973), though no family in *Üçyol* is mentioned in this work.

<sup>31</sup> For my more detailed discussion of this episode, see Miyazawa 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Certainly, there were a small number of graduate theses on Circassians before these two Master's theses. However, these earlier works were usually done within the framework of village studies, and Circassians' ethnicity and identity in Turkey were not explicitly discussed.

<sup>33</sup> According to a Circassian Ph.D. student studying political science in Istanbul, one of the reasons why Circassians remain under researched is that the issues related to Circassians are not seen as politically significant enough in Turkey. Thus, the same subject that will be considered significant and worth examining for Armenians and Kurds, may not be seen meaningful when applied to Circassians.

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**DIASPORA NATIONALISM AS A GENDERED DISCOURSE:  
THE CIRCASSIAN DIASPORA IN TURKEY**  
*Setenay Nil Doğan*<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction**

Since the 1990s, “diaspora,” a relatively old term, has gained widespread circulation. It has become a tool for social science to investigate the hybrid, transnational and global sites of identities and politics which challenge the national order of things, the naturalized and normalized understanding of the world of nations as a discrete partitioning of territory.<sup>2</sup> The concept of diaspora rather than referring to particular experiences of some particular communities has now become crucial for social science to rethink the concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'nationalism' in the context of shifting borders, processes of globalization and the production of diasporas.<sup>3</sup>

Diasporas have the potential to challenge nation-states, national historiographies and the national order of things. However regarding diaspora as a challenge posed *vis-à-vis* the nation-state is not sufficient to understand diaspora politics and diasporic condition. Diasporas' relationships with nation-states are much more complicated; diasporas both challenge and corroborate nation-state authority<sup>4</sup> and national order within which nation-states are located. As diasporas have proved to be effective political groups in the 1990s as far as conflicts, wars and politics are concerned; diasporic communities are mostly bound by their own nationalisms. Such a form of nationalism is shaped not only by challenging the nation-state but also by a more subtle web of relations with the host community, homeland<sup>5</sup> and other nationalisms, especially the hegemonic nationalism in the host society. These interconnections of diaspora nationalism are significant to understand the terms of survival, resistance and regeneration for diasporas.

This paper argues that these interconnections are made available to diaspora nationalisms not only by political and technological developments but also by a particular gender regime. Diaspora nationalisms are sustained by particular constructions of masculinity and femininity. Re-reading the diaspora from a gender perspective will shed light on the centrality of particular types of masculinities and femininities within diaspora nationalism and diasporic communities.

**Diaspora as / at the Crossroads:<sup>6</sup> Nationalism, Ethnicity and Globalization**

An analysis of diaspora nationalism requires locating the concept of diaspora nationalism in the theoretical scholarship on diaspora. This section aims to explore the literature on diaspora. Throughout the 1990s, the debates on diaspora have peaked: technological, political and social changes (collapse of the Soviet Bloc, end of Cold War, communication technology, etc.), the rise of the politics of identity, the claims to 'difference', a defense of multiculturalism and the questioning of the notions of national sovereignty and territoriality have all added new dimensions to the notion of diaspora. Hence, social science has been face to face with a much more complicated and yet vaguely defined notion of diaspora that is simultaneously intertwined with the notions of nationalism, ethnicity and globalization more than ever.

The notion of diaspora is studied by various disciplines such as history, anthropology, international relations, cultural studies, political science, etc. Yet I argue that the literature on diaspora is characterized by two consensuses and two quite opposite approaches to the definition, characteristics and categorization of diasporas.

The first consensus in the literature on diaspora concerns the proliferation of the meanings of the diaspora *vis-à-vis* the original connotation. Unlike the original meaning which was associated with the experiences of the Armenians, Jews and Greeks, the concept of diaspora now has multiple usages that may refer to immigrants, refugees, guest workers, exile communities, and ethnic communities.

Therefore, what had started as the particular experience of some specific communities now includes a host of societies and communities that have had very different histories and experiences.

The second consensus deals with the relationships between diasporas and processes of globalization. Globalization is not only the mobility of people beyond national boundaries and borders but also the problematization of boundaries and borders that creates the possibility for a condition of post-nationality which is marked by the production of "diasporic public spheres" and "nonterritorial principles of solidarity".<sup>7</sup> Hence although establishing an exact causal connection between "diasporization" and globalization is hard, globalization has given advantages to the diasporic communities.

Apart from two related consensuses on the changing contexts of the diasporas, diaspora studies are shaped by two different approaches. The basic difference between the two approaches concerns the definition of the notion of diaspora. As a starting point, the simplest and most general definition of diaspora refers to the dispersal of a people from its original homeland. Yet such a definition is criticized for being too broad to be useful.<sup>8</sup> Studies of diaspora as a descriptive tool respond to the need for a more specific, yet a more applicable definition. One such attempt to list the key characteristics of diasporas has come from Safran who defines diaspora as a community whose members, having been dispersed from an original "center" to two or more foreign regions, retain a collective memory, vision, myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements; the idea of return; continuous relationships with that homeland which define their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity; a belief that they are not fully accepted in their host societies and that all members of diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland.<sup>9</sup>

Cohen further develops Safran's list with additional emphasis on alternative routes to diaspora formation in search of work, trade or colonial ambitions; the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation; a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate; a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and the possibility of a distinctive creative life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.<sup>10</sup> Based on the modes and reasons of exile or migration, he categorizes diasporas as victim/refugee, imperial/colonial, labor/service, trade/business/professional and cultural/hybrid/postmodern.<sup>11</sup> Placing Jews and Palestinians, or Ancient Greeks and Russians within the same atemporal category, his account does not historicize the experiences and characteristics of various diaspora communities.

These ideal types of diasporas are criticized on several grounds. First, by postulating the homeland as a diaspora's constitutive place of origin and naturalizing spaciality, these ideal-types are based on "dreams of boundedness and authenticity".<sup>12</sup> In the case of diaspora, 'homeland' connotes not a singular identity based on a single place but "dislocation, contradiction, unforeseen cultural possibilities, multiple geographies of identity exceeding the boundaries of nation-states."<sup>13</sup> Secondly, this checklist approach roots the concept of diaspora in the group itself and hence reifies diasporic identity. Yet identities are never fixed and simultaneous diasporic identities are possible even within a single diaspora.<sup>14</sup> Hence rather than taking diaspora and diasporic identity for granted, the multidimensionality and heterogeneity through which these groups are formed, reformed and revived should be explored. The third, but not the last, criticism underscores that diasporas are neither given nor fixed: diasporic communities wax and wane depending on the changing possibilities (obstacles, openings, antagonisms and connections) in their host countries, homelands and transnational arenas.<sup>15</sup> Cohen's and Safran's approach takes diaspora as an unproblematic entity whose formations have been based on either the exact moment of migration or the relationship with the homeland after that particular moment, and hence ignores the dynamic social and historical processes out of which these groups are created and constantly recreated.

These critiques lead us to the second approach that studies diaspora as a condition and as a process rather than as an ideal-typical community. Starting with criticism of the descriptive accounts, post-modern accounts focus on diaspora as a condition, experience, process and consciousness. Here diaspora is not a matter of categorization but a tool for the deconstruction of the categories themselves. From such a perspective, the notion of diaspora denotes a specific type of experience and thinking, that is 'diaspora consciousness' that is a characteristic of people living 'here' and 'there', a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue, and hence distinct versions of modern and transnational experience.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, diaspora consciousness is considered to have the ability to question the configurations of power and the hegemony of the all-pervasive nation-state.<sup>17</sup>

In the post-modern account, diaspora is not a stable entity or identity that refers to a particular moment of dispersal from a particular territory. It denotes the processes of unsettling, continuous dislocation and hybridization. Diasporas refer to globally mobile categories of identification<sup>18</sup> that are "contested, complex and embedded in multiple narratives of struggle."<sup>19</sup> Rather than being organic and unproblematic entities, diaspora communities and their cultures are the instances and products of the processes of diasporization, transplantation and syncretization.<sup>20</sup> In these accounts, diaspora challenges our notions of place, disrupts those normative spatial-temporal units of analysis like nation and culture, and denotes one type of displacement.<sup>21</sup>

Denoting displacement and deterritorialization, the notion of diaspora is considered beyond ethnicity and nationalism. Such a perspective regards diaspora communities as the antithesis of older understandings of ethnicity and nationalism. The notion of diaspora no longer refers to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland which is the old, the imperializing, the homogenizing form of "ethnicity" but it is defined by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and hybridity that refer to identities which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference.<sup>22</sup> Post-modern accounts claim that challenging the conceptual limits imposed by national and ethnic/racial boundaries<sup>23</sup> and delineating how the local and global have become intertwined in the processes of globalization,<sup>24</sup> 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 shaped through the interplay of globalization, diversity and hybridization.

There are several interrelated critiques of the post-modernist approach. First, the automatic identification of the diasporic and the hybrid with a politically progressive and democratic agenda are criticized as a fetishization, which ignores the importance of contemporary economic processes and various kinds of diasporic subject positions that have been used strategically for economic gain.<sup>25</sup> Diasporas and their projects are not necessarily more democratic or egalitarian than the workings of nation-states. Furthermore, diasporas just like any other national or ethnic group enhance multiple hierarchies. Diasporic identity is foremost a collective identity that provides us with scripts on the proper ways of having that particular collective identity, and hence the expectations to be met.<sup>26</sup> Therefore the question here is whether the collective identity at hand is part of an emancipating project or whether it is another form of oppression or tyranny.

Secondly, though deterritorialization takes place on a global scale, some lands are still considered sacred by the diasporas, and the claims to imagined or mythical homelands still persist among some communities. The 'call of the homeland' still continues to resonate as one of the most effective instruments of nationalists to mobilize their members.<sup>27</sup> These attachments and claims to territories are the very part of the hybridity that the post-modernist studies celebrate.

Thirdly, the assumption that diaspora is totally beyond the notion of ethnicity is problematic. Given that *ethniés* are defined by a common proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, a link with a homeland which may not be physically occupied but is nonetheless symbolically attached, and finally, a sense of solidarity on the part of at least some sections of the

*ethnie*'s population,<sup>28</sup> the notions of *ethnie* and diaspora have so much in common. The legitimation and strength of the diasporic groups may be gained through global connections and sought in global contexts, yet diasporas may be reconstituting new and deterritorialized forms of ethnic and particularist ethnic absolutism.<sup>29</sup> Diaspora is not beyond ethnicity but "a particular type of ethnic category, one that exists across the boundaries of nation states rather than within them."<sup>30</sup> Hence the practices and discourses that pertain to diaspora communities should also be read through the notion of ethnicity.

Fourthly, despite the consensus in the literature on the fact that globalization provides diasporas with new opportunities beyond the nation-state; there is no consensus on the characteristics of the diaspora communities that is supported by the processes and technologies of globalization. Given that globalization refers to multiple processes which are complex, often resisted and unevenly developed over space and time;<sup>31</sup> the relationships between these multiple processes and diaspora communities is multi-layered, complicated and still open to debate. The processes of globalization and the diasporas that they support do not necessarily transform into a democratic political sphere. Global political spheres can as well be filled with nationalisms of various kinds<sup>32</sup> and diaspora nationalism may be one of those nationalisms.

This study argues that analyses of the ways in which diasporas are imagined through nationalist frameworks is crucial for social science to understand the notion of diaspora and diaspora politics in particular and nationalism in general. Given such a theoretical framework, this study employs the notion of diaspora first, as a choice which is manifested as a voice at the political level and which even though ambivalent and fragmented may serve to deconstruct hegemonic nationalism.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, diasporas are regarded as composed of multiple actors who participate in several networks of relationships with the homeland, host community, and international community.<sup>34</sup> Such an approach aims to move away from the idea of "victim diaspora" and to locate diaspora in a more complicated web of relationships, bargains and strategies. Thirdly, this study considers diaspora the crossroads where nationalism, ethnicity and globalization meet and engage one another. From such a perspective, diaspora is a heuristic device through which terrains of nationalism, ethnicity and globalization can be explored.

### **Diaspora Nationalism**

Although diasporas are heterogeneous and contested spaces, every diaspora constantly constructs a collective identity, a "common we."<sup>35</sup> Exploring the processes through which the collective "we" is constructed are crucial to understanding how diasporic identities that are actually contested, complex and embedded in multiple narratives of struggle assume a singular, unified and homogeneous form within the nationalist frame.<sup>36</sup>

Diasporas embrace a form of politics that is enmeshed in a nationalism that often has a life of its own, semi-independent from developments in the homeland, but frequently making reference to it.<sup>37</sup> Diaspora nationalism is nationalism within ethnic groups living voluntarily or involuntarily in host communities, maintaining attitudes of loyalty and patriotism towards their home countries and sometimes organizing themselves to this effect.<sup>38</sup> Through diaspora nationalism, a displaced community may keep the nationalist agenda alive in isolation.<sup>39</sup> The members of diasporic community may not politically orient themselves to the state in which they are located, but to the country of origin, hence employ long-distance nationalism<sup>40</sup> that is based on a claim to membership in a political community that stretches beyond the territorial borders of a homeland.<sup>41</sup> However such 'distance' is only a partial truth, and to understand the immediacy of this participation the implications of the modern information and communication revolutions should be considered.<sup>42</sup>

Despite all hybrid identities and discourses within which they are located, diasporas enhance a kind of nationalism that is embedded in the reproduction and maintenance of multiple hierarchies. It is

ironic that diasporas, carriers of transnationalization, may become the self-proclaimed guardians of rigorous nationalist and religious projects<sup>43</sup> through their absolutist orientations to minorities and majorities both within the diaspora and in the so-called homeland.<sup>44</sup>

Yet such a nationalism is a weapon of the relatively weak, and in order to understand diaspora nationalism, nationalist longing and nostalgic visions should be distinguished from actual processes of nation building.<sup>45</sup> Hence it would be a mistake to consider long-distance nationalism necessarily extremist.

### **Gendering the Diaspora Literature**

There is a tendency in the theoretical accounts of diaspora to talk of travel and displacement in unmarked ways<sup>46</sup> and analyses that focus on the domains of diasporic complexity such as gender and class are mostly lacking.<sup>47</sup> However diasporic experiences, formations, histories and narratives are not independent of gender but grounded in gendered meanings, practices, hierarchies, discourses and experiences.

The existing studies on diaspora with a focus on gender have revealed that the way the nation and the diaspora are interlocked is shaped by particular gender ideologies, constructions and relations: gender ideologies are a fundamental subtext which informs the individual strategies that men and women use to straddle the gap between 'nation' and 'diaspora'.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore when analyzed from a gender perspective, diasporic communities enhance collective identities that are formed through the patriarchal dominance of male diasporic leaders; the exploitation of diasporic women, women's cultural invocation as objects of male gaze; and the formulation of a particular role imposed on and expected from women.<sup>49</sup> The attempt to maintain the connections with the homelands, with kinship networks, and with traditions may renew patriarchal structures.<sup>50</sup>

However, diasporic condition and identities may also empower the members of the community. Some transnational diasporic organizations built by women allow them to transcend their local identity as 'victims' and gain a limited professional and personal liberation within the limits set by the diasporic contexts that assign women the role of the guardian of the national boundaries.<sup>51</sup> In addition to that, women in the diaspora may use their educational and employment achievements to renegotiate gender relations.<sup>52</sup> Yet, it is quite debatable whether this "emancipated but unliberated"<sup>53</sup> condition is empowerment as far as women are concerned.

Given the limitations of the diaspora literature on gender, a gender study of diaspora communities and diaspora nationalism requires to be complemented by gender theories which have underlined and explored the profoundly gendered discourses and spaces of nationalism. Gender studies highlight that national projects that aim to build the nation, nation-state and the ethnic group are simultaneously gender projects.<sup>54</sup> Yuval-Davis and Anthias list the major ways in which women have tended to participate in ethnic and national processes: first, as biological reproducers of members of collectivities; second, as reproducers of the boundaries of the groups; third, as transmitters and carriers of its culture who contribute to the ideological reproduction of the community; fourth, as signifiers of ethnic/national differences; and finally, as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.<sup>55</sup>

Following Yuval-Davis and Anthias' account, gender studies provide us with the following approaches to nationalism. A first group of gender studies analyze nationalism as embedded in nation-state policies. Exploration of state policies regarding education, citizenship and reproduction from a gender perspective reveals that these policies of the nation-state, even the ones that claim to be the most 'benevolent,' work for the 'nationalization' of women as part of the nationalist projects.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the nation-state is not gender neutral but profoundly gendered. Though such an approach is crucial to unmask the claimed neutrality of the nation-state and understand how nation-states as national projects create gender hierarchies, it prioritizes the nation-state, which is one among the

many sources of patriarchy and oppression and does not take into account the fact that some nationalisms precede or lack nation-states.

Secondly, gender studies focus on women as the direct participants in nationalist struggles and argues that once the nationalist struggle is over, feminist nationalists often become entrapped in a new form of patriarchy.<sup>57</sup> Hence nationalism in the form of a national struggle may work for empowerment as far as women are concerned, yet that empowerment has limits drawn by nationalism itself. Such an approach explains the limitations of nationalism in taking women into the 'brotherhood'. However, focusing on particular historical national struggles which are moments of national mobilization does not explain how nationalism permeates and genders the fabric of everyday life, the beliefs and practices of individuals, groups and nations.

Thirdly, feminist scholarship studies nationalism as a project that is sustained by gendered discourses, iconographies and meanings. Multiple images of women are considered to be central elements of the nationalist discourse which construct women simultaneously as victims of underdevelopment, as symbols of modernity for the new nation, as symbols of national honor, as the mothers of the nation, as the subjects who will protect the spiritual sphere of the community and its cultural authenticity, as goddesses and as the preservers of the past.<sup>58</sup> Defining the "national" man and woman different from those of other nations, the discourse of nationalism aims to recreate and reproduce its own national essence through these presumed differences in gender relationships and constructions.<sup>59</sup> Nationalisms are gendered to the extent that they reproduce different and particular discourses, constructions and images of masculinity and femininity: while 'national' man is portrayed as "the martyr/protector/soldier/hero" in the nationalist discourse, female is cast as "mother/guardian, the carrier of the tradition and cultural mores".<sup>60</sup>

Given the literature on nationalism and gender, one of the major questions is the similarities and differences between diaspora nationalism – which is "a very distinctive, very conspicuous, important sub-species of nationalism"<sup>61</sup> – and state-linked nationalisms that have either completed their state formation or aimed to form its own state. This chapter argues that when analyzed from a gender perspective, although they are quite similar, diaspora nationalism is different than state-linked nationalisms. Diasporic groups are subjected to two sets of gender relations, those of the dominant society and those internal to the group.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, there is also the homeland dimension, which is not necessarily in harmony with the norms of diasporic communities in terms of gender relations. Hence the sources, the rivals, the loyalties and the 'threats' that diaspora nationalisms interact are multiple. This study proposes that diaspora nationalisms are far more complex than state nationalisms in terms of their relationships with gender. Women in the diasporic communities are "subject-ed by a double articulation of discourses of cultural difference and patriarchy"<sup>63</sup> which takes place among the relationships of the diaspora with the homeland, host community and transnational network. Although the literature on diaspora and gender emphasizes the possibilities of limited emancipation and though diaspora nationalism has no state power, I argue that diaspora nationalism, however fragmented or chaotic it is, locates itself in a constant 'state of emergency' and hence has the ability to constantly renew and recreate patriarchy. This paper will turn to exploring these gendered dimensions of diaspora nationalism through the case of Circassians in Turkey.

### **The Circassians in Turkey as Diaspora**

The Circassians are the indigenous people of the northwestern Caucasus who emigrated (or were exiled)<sup>64</sup> to the Ottoman lands in the nineteenth century; pushed by Russian expansion into the Caucasus, and encouraged by the Ottoman Empire, large numbers of Circassians emigrated to Ottoman lands such as Anatolia, Syrian Province and the Balkans. The largest wave of emigration was to Anatolia and in Turkey today there exists a large Circassian community; it is the largest Circassian community when compared to Syria, Jordan and Palestine/Israel.<sup>65</sup>

Circassians in Turkey have used Caucasian Culture Associations (*Kafkas Kültür Dernekleri*) for interaction, socialization and cultural activities,<sup>66</sup> magazines since decades and recently e-mail discussion groups for communication. The finances and activities of these associations and foundations are subject to regular government review, although this is considered to be a standard procedure both by the activists working in associations and authorities.<sup>67</sup> Until the 1960s, Circassian organizations and magazines, which were quite ephemeral and volatile, appeared under the guise of North Caucasian “Turks,” and cautiousness and anti-communism gave the organizations and the publications their characteristics.<sup>68</sup>

Starting from the mid-1960s, the discourse of the community changed. The idea that Circassians are a Turkic tribe was rejected; the idea of return/repatriation, and the threats of assimilation and Turkification became the dominant themes; slogans such as “our God is our freedom, our temple is the homeland” and “to serve a foreigner and neglect one's own interest is an error” were increasingly used.<sup>69</sup> As the politically turbulent decade of the 1970s led to the emergence of two groups within the community: namely, the *devrimci* (revolutionaries) suggesting that Circassian rights could only be attained through a socialist revolution and the *dönüşçü / göççü*, (‘returnists’) who advocated a return to the homeland,<sup>70</sup> the military regime of 1980 closed all associations, closely scrutinized the ones representing non-Turkish cultural movements<sup>71</sup> and confiscated the official documents of all Circassian associations which further adds to the hardships of studying Circassians in Turkey. By the year 1984, the associations reappeared. Liberalization and the more liberal outlook of the Prime Minister Turgut Özal regarding Kurdish cultural identity in Turkey, and *Glasnost* in the Soviet Union contributed to the emergence of a political atmosphere within which associations representing non-Turkish communities and their activities can be renewed.<sup>72</sup>

The meanings and effects of the Post-Soviet conjuncture; that is, the collapse of Soviet Union, end of the Cold War, and the formation of new nation-states, which implies simultaneously the formation of several newly formed diaspora communities, have been twofold for the Circassian community in Turkey.

On the one hand, the concerns, politics, geography and peoples of the “homeland” had become accessible for the Circassian diaspora. The end of Soviet Union meant the expansion and liberalization of networks between the homeland and diaspora communities in terms of scope and extent and this process was simultaneously coupled with a rise of ethnic identities in Turkey, non-Turkish nationalisms and Turkish nationalism. Within this context, Circassian identity, which has been limited to the activists and associations up until that time, became more pronounced, visible and public. For instance, major nationwide newspapers and magazines have focused on Circassians: many celebrities have publicly announced their Circassian origins. In 1995, the first Circassian musical cassette, “Circassian Melodies” (*Çerkes Ezgileri*) was produced for general consumption on the national market;<sup>73</sup> soon to be followed by “Circassian Folk Songs” (*Çerkes Halk Şarkıları Wered 1*).<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, during the 1990s the Caucasus proved to be the most unstable region of the former Soviet Union, witnessing five wars: Nagorno-Karabagh (Armenia – Azerbaijan, in 1989-1995), South Ossetian - Georgian (in 1991-1992), Abkhazian - Georgian (in 1992-1993), North Ossetian - Ingush (in 1992), and Chechen - Russian (in 1994 - 1996); each of these wars have led to the mobilization of Circassians in Turkey either in the form of donations or as volunteer soldiers serving in the Caucasus.<sup>75</sup> Hence the post-Soviet conjuncture implied a revival of Circassian identity and politics, which also reflected itself in the production and reproduction of culture by the Circassian diaspora in Turkey.

On the other hand, the collapse of Soviet Union and its aftermath have challenged all the Circassian activist groups in Turkey and the existing discourses with regard to identity, culture, homeland and ethnicity. In the 1990s, no revolutionaries were left and the once so-called “utopia of return” has been challenged by the changing meanings of 'homeland': instead of being a space that symbolized

the timeless qualities of Circassians and the immemorial past, the homeland has become a real territory.<sup>76</sup> The Circassian community in Turkey has always referred to a homeland that is considered sacred. Even when discourse on the homeland has not been accompanied by a discourse on exile before the 1990s, the homeland has been regarded as the site where Circassians were once 'rooted'.<sup>77</sup> Yet throughout the Cold War, there was almost no actual relationship with the homeland. For the Circassians in Turkey, the 1990s have brought their 'roots', their relatives and imagined homeland into reality.<sup>78</sup> While *Glasnost* and the collapse of the Soviet Union fuelled an initial enthusiasm about the homeland, return,<sup>79</sup> and repatriation;<sup>80</sup> living the ideal has proved to be far from unproblematic: instead of commonality and a naturalized ethnicity, these encounters with the so-called homeland have generated an experience of difference, disjuncture and a sense of rupture.<sup>81</sup> In several instances of return, the Circassians who left Turkey (or other countries) and returned to their "homelands" were been dubbed "Turks," "Syrians," etc. for a long time.

Yet the post-Soviet conjuncture proved to be a fertile ground for diaspora politics at the international and local levels as far as organization and communication are concerned. After several congresses with the participation of many groups of Circassians from different countries and the homeland, the World Circassian Federation was established in the mid-1990s. In Turkey, *Kaf-Der* (Caucasian Association), which was established in 1993 as an umbrella organization, constituted the largest Circassian associational network until 2004 when it was replaced by a larger organization, *Kaf-Fed* (Caucasian Federation).<sup>82</sup>

Mostly, the debates on returning to the homeland have faded away in the mid-1990s. The expansion of group rights in line with Turkey's candidacy to EU membership, especially the right to education in the mother tongue, dominated the debates in the Circassian public sphere in the early 2000s.<sup>83</sup> Parallel to these developments, it has been argued that the minority strategy that took place in the 1990s as a reaction against the rise of Turkish and other nationalisms is now being substituted by a diasporic identity, which has become the principal strategizing tool of Circassians in Turkey.<sup>84</sup>

This chapter examines Circassians as a diaspora. When the self-definition of the group is taken into account, it is seen that the Circassians in Turkey has defined itself in various ways and used the terms immigrant, minority, diaspora and nation interchangeably. While all of these identifications may be useful, immigration, ethnicity and minority status are not the only contexts by which Circassians define themselves. The existence of multiple, conflicting and strategically shaky grounds on which Circassians define themselves signals that Circassians in Turkey continuously define themselves through multiple solidarities, identities, narratives and relations. Studying Circassians in Turkey as an *ethnié*, minority group or immigrants freezes such diversity and reduces it to one dimension which is only one among many. Such an approach ignores the web of relations between homeland, host country and diasporic community; the continuous references of Circassians in Turkey to the homeland, to the diaspora and to Circassians in other countries; and the return movement of the 1990s, which cannot be regarded as just an instance of immigration or ethnicity but as a conscious move that the Circassians have claimed to be looking forward to since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the concepts of *ethnié*, immigrant and minority will be useful to the extent that they are part of diaspora discourse which is embedded in politics of Turkey and homeland, international politics, and globalization.

Circassians in Turkey and other countries have remained under-researched when compared to other diasporic communities such as Jewish, Armenian and Black Atlantic diasporas. What is even less studied is the analysis of the Circassian diaspora as embracing diaspora nationalism. Studying diaspora nationalism implies that diasporic subjects, within the limits set by the politics of homeland, host community and international relations, are actors who are capable of negotiating, acting, reacting, resisting and narrating. This study aims to analyze Circassian nationalists as actors who



interact with and articulate multiple discourses on nation, nationalism, diaspora and Turkish nationalism.

Within the academic studies on ethnic groups in Turkey Circassians are either unmentioned or added into the research as footnotes or parentheses. Studies and debates on ethnicity in Turkey are dominated by a focus on “the Kurdish question”<sup>85</sup> and studies on minority groups focus on Jewish, Greek and Armenian groups.<sup>86</sup> This study argues that a better understanding of ethnicity and nationalism in Turkey should include analyses of the other ethnic groups whose histories and experiences may not be shaped by explicit oppression, assimilation or conflict but by a more subtle set of relationships, tensions, and flirtations with official historiography and Turkish nationalism.

This chapter claims that within the Circassian community in Turkey, there has always been a group that has embraced diaspora nationalism. Yet after 1990, within a particular historical context that has been available through the processes of globalization and post-Soviet conjuncture, Circassian diaspora nationalism gained strength. Only within that context does the diaspora nationalism of Circassian elites become more visible, extensive and 'recognized'. Hence rather than being a taken-for-granted phenomenon, the diaspora nationalism of the Circassians in Turkey is an emergent phenomenon that should be explored in the light of globalization, nationalism, ethnicity and diasporization. This chapter will now explore how the Circassian diaspora is imagined by the diaspora nationalists and how this imagination itself is gendered.

### **Primary Research**

This study is indeed rooted in my early childhood; the times when I used to accompany my father going to the conferences, congresses, and events that the Circassian community in Turkey organized. From those days, I remember that it was always Circassian men doing the political talk. Women – if there are any – used to sit in their respectful and dignified manner. As an adult woman, I have watched Circassian women in their respectful and silent manners in several Circassian meetings within which there was no female voice. Ironically, Circassians has always been proud of the way they behaved towards women: “Circassians do not beat their wives,”<sup>87</sup> “Circassian women are freer when compared to the other women in [Turkish] society,” “They are the most respected group in Circassian society.” That contradiction of my community has produced the initial spark that motivated this work: How could a culture that is so proud of the high status of women in society and its respect for women can have so many silent women?<sup>88</sup> Starting from a personal curiosity, this paper aims to explore the diasporic constructions of masculinity and femininity among the Circassians in Turkey.

My still on-going research for this chapter is based on two main sources: magazines published by Circassian nationalists in Turkey and Circassian e-mail Internet discussion groups. I have analyzed the statements of Circassian nationalists concerning gender in three groups.

The first group is composed of normative arguments about the community's gender regime. In the nationalist discourse of Circassians in Turkey women are designated as the members responsible for the reproduction of the ethnic community and protection of the ethnic boundaries of the community.<sup>89</sup> Prevention of assimilation through intermarriages is portrayed as an exclusively feminine diasporic responsibility. Femininity is the site where differences are supposed to be displayed and protected *vis-à-vis* the assumed threats of assimilation and 'loss of the Circassian culture'.<sup>90</sup> While women form the group responsible for the ethnic and cultural reproduction of the community, men are immune from this reproductive role or mission. Furthermore it is the men and their masculine affairs – such as war making, politics, and diplomacy – working hand-in-hand with careers in the military that claim to 'earn' the citizenship in the host country. Both constructions serve for the 'survival' of the diaspora. Yet the service is gendered. The discourse of Circassian

diaspora nationalism is gendered to the extent that it has provided men and women of the diaspora with different constructions, missions and roles.

What makes diaspora nationalism different from other nationalisms is its ability to deal with dual territorialization and dual locations that encompass both the so-called homelands and the host societies.<sup>91</sup> The basic hypothesis of this research, that diaspora nationalism is a gendered discourse, also implies that the connections of the diasporic community with the homeland and host community are also gendered. The second and the third group of statements concern these connections.

A second group of statements that focus on the relationships and comparisons with the host community reveals that Circassian nationalists consider Circassian women 'different' from other women in Turkey: they are much better housewives; they are chaste, well-educated and respectful. Interestingly, the concept and the image of "Circassian girl" are also very well known in Turkey among non-Circassian groups.<sup>92</sup> Although Circassians complain about being known in the Turkish public for their girls and foods, they indeed agree that Circassian women are different in terms of chastity, beauty and manners. Turkish nationalists in some instances have condemned Circassians for "selling their girls to the Palace" and Circassian nationalists harshly reject these claims.

In the nationalist discourse of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey, whereas femininity is constructed as 'the difference' from the host community, hegemonic masculinity is highly militarized. Constructions of masculinity that are intertwined with militarism and military experience in the form of war-making are central to sustaining the links of diaspora nationalism with the host community and dominant nationalism. Although Circassians have joined other wars before and after the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923), one of the contemporary areas of inquiry among Circassian diaspora researchers in Turkey is the role of Circassians in this war, which is considered historically to be the constitutive war of the Turkish Republic.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, most of the Circassian people today refer to their "grandfathers who has shed blood for this country" to claim equal rights of citizenship *vis-à-vis* any possibility of ethnic discrimination. Participation in the Turkish War of Independence links diaspora nationalism to the Turkish Republic and Turkish official historiography. These claims to the shared experiences of war-making challenge the official historiography in Turkey which is not only silent on the 'claimed' participation of Circassians into the War of Independence but also regards the Cerkes (Circassian) Ethem<sup>94</sup> affair as a turning point after which the "traitors" are eliminated from the national cause. Although the Çerkes Ethem affair that resulted in the elimination of independent guerrilla forces in favor of a regular army,<sup>95</sup> is still a taboo subject in Turkish history, is unrelated to ethnic and national causes as far as the Circassians in Turkey are concerned,<sup>96</sup> its fallout was destructive for Circassian groups in Turkey. Since the 1960s, Çerkes Ethem has not been called "the traitor" in history books. Yet the well-known identification still persists. Circassians nationalists, since the 1990s, have challenged and reversed the national historiography by claims of participation in the War of Independence. They have also rejected the title "traitor" concerning Cerkes Ethem affair not as historically invalid but as politically incorrect. As an example, one reader letter in a newspaper in 1990 complains about and rejects such a use of the name Circassian:

It has been stated that Cerkes Ethem is a traitor, that he escaped, that he stabbed the country in the back ... When they say "as strong as a Turk," they give Yasar Dogu as an example. However, Yasar Dogu is a Circassian. So why is it Cerkes (Circassian) Ethem and not Cerkes (Circassian) Yasar Doğu? These are issues that make many people like me heartsick. (M. K. Öke, "Cerkesler," *Türkiye*, 1 November 1990 [translated from Turkish by the author]).

Circassian nationalists in the 1990s have tried to overcome the stigmata of the Çerkes Ethem affair by defending political correctness and reversing the narrative from treachery to extensive participation into the nation-building process that is associated with fighting wars. Yet, the connection between fighting wars and citizenship is left intact.

Hence the military experience that is shared with the people of Turkey, an exclusively masculine affair as far as the Circassians in Turkey are concerned, becomes the source of claims over equal citizenship and equality. While differences are displayed and sustained through the constructions of femininity, claims to equality and citizenship rights are formulated through a particular masculine experience of fighting wars, that is shared with the host community. The links with the Republic of Turkey are thus discursively formed through shared experiences of militarism that are exclusively masculine.

These nationalist constructions link the diasporic community to the host community or simultaneously differentiate it from the host. This analysis proposes that a particular gender discourse has been fundamental for Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey to define and to locate itself *vis-à-vis*/through Turkish nationalism.

Thirdly, the question of how these gender constructions link the diaspora to the homeland and simultaneously differentiate it from the homeland remain to be explored. While differences from the host community are displayed through constructions, duties and missions that supposedly pertain to women, such nationalist constructions and expectations also link the diasporic community to an authentic essence, to "home". Yet such gendered connections with the homeland are prone to change and transformation. Diasporic communities may as well differentiate themselves from the homeland through the gender constructions.

In the case of Circassians in Turkey, encounters with the homeland after the collapse of Soviet Union have produced silences in the diaspora as far as written documents readily at hand are concerned. Yet, the claimed differences between the homeland and diaspora in terms of values and 'the protection of the heritage' have been crucial in the reinforcement of these constructions in the diaspora. Diaspora nationalists have started to reconsider the diaspora as the "real" site of their community, even entertaining the notion that it has protected traditional values and culture much better than the homeland. Such a discursive move has implied an additional and increased emphasis on the significance of women's role in terms of preventing assimilation and protecting the boundaries of the ethnic and cultural group. Since the 1990s in the discourse of diaspora nationalism, constructions of femininity differentiate Circassian diaspora in Turkey not only from the people of Turkey but also from the homeland.

While the increasing relationships with the homeland have fortified the gendered roles of women, Circassian masculinity has been redefined through participation into the wars of the homeland either as voluntary soldiers or as aid donors. From a nationalist framework, such militaristic enterprises have been considered the fulfillment of diasporic duty to the homeland and hence the affirmation of the survival of the diasporic identity. While the claims to equality and equal rights in the host country are based on the shared military experience with the people of the Turkish Republic, diaspora discourse and diaspora nationalism are connected to the homeland through active participation in the wars of the homeland. Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey in the 1990s has been linked to the once-imagined homeland through the shared experiences of militarism, which are once again exclusively masculine affairs. Since the 1990s, militarized nationalist constructions of masculinity connect the Circassian diaspora in Turkey not only to the Turkish Republic and Turkish historiography but also to the homeland.

### **Conclusion**

My argument is that the constructions of masculinity and femininity that are embraced by Circassian nationalists have been a significant part of the fragile stance that the Circassian community in Turkey has pursued *vis-à-vis* and through Turkish nationalism. Furthermore, these constructions – which are subject to change and reconstruction – have worked to cope with the international developments regarding the post-Soviet conjuncture, which has implied new understandings of the notions of

homeland, identity and diasporic experience for the Circassian community in Turkey. Therefore, particular constructions of masculinity and femininity have worked as formations of diaspora nationalism which locates itself not only *vis-à-vis* / through Turkish nationalism but also within the politics of the so-called homeland. Within diaspora nationalism, the discourse on the 'inbetweenness' of diasporas, connections with the homeland and host community, and diasporic condition are formed, recreated and reinvented through gender constructions. Exploring such gendered dimensions of diaspora nationalism allows us to rethink not only diasporas but also understandings of nationalism, ethnicity and globalization, within which diasporas are embedded.

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## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> L. Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 52-74, 55.

<sup>3</sup> S. Shami, "Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 617-646.

<sup>4</sup> B. Axel, "Context of Diaspora," *Cultural Anthropology* 19:1 (2004): 26-60, 54.

<sup>5</sup> This study takes the "homeland" not as an objective historical fact but as a dynamic construction that attains meaning not only through the political developments but also through memories, discourses and narratives of individuals on "home" and "homeland."

<sup>6</sup> I initially used the word 'crossroads' as a "place where roads meet and cross". However, the phrase 'at the crossroads' meaning "at a critical turning point (in life, etc.);" also makes sense given the fault lines within the diaspora literature.

<sup>7</sup> A. Appadurai quoted in S. Shami, "Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 617-646.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance K. D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10:2 (2001): 189-219.

<sup>9</sup> W. Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1:1 (1991): 83-99.

<sup>10</sup> R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, (London: University College of London Press, 1997), 26.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> B. Axel, "Context of Diaspora," *Cultural Anthropology* 19:1 (2004): 26-60, 30-32.

<sup>13</sup> D. Kondo, "The Narrative Production of 'Home,' Community, and Political Identity in Asian Theater," in *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity*, eds. S. Lavie and T. Swedenburg, ((Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 96-117, 100.

<sup>14</sup> K. D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10(2) (2001): 189-219, 193.

<sup>15</sup> J. Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9:3 (1994): 302-338, 306.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 319.

<sup>17</sup> B. Avtar, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 1996), 183.

<sup>18</sup> B. Axel, "Context of Diaspora," *Cultural Anthropology* 19:1 (2004): 26-60, 27.

<sup>19</sup> S. Houston and R. Wright, "Making and Remaking Tibetan Diasporic Identities," *Social and Cultural Geography* 4:2 (2003): 217-232, 217.

<sup>20</sup> S. Hall, "Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad," *Small Axe* 3 (1996): 1-18, 10.

<sup>21</sup> S. Lavie and T. Swedenburg, eds., *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>22</sup> Hall quoted in R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: University College of London Press, 1997), 138.

<sup>23</sup> S. Lavie and T. Swedenburg, eds., *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> B. Axel, "Context of Diaspora," *Cultural Anthropology* 19:1 (2004): 26-60, 47.

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- <sup>37</sup>Z. Skrbis, *Long-distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1999).
- <sup>38</sup>J. Landau, "Diaspora and Language," in *Modern Diaspora in International Politics*, ed. G. Sheffer, (London: Croom Helm, 1986); J. Landau, "Diaspora Nationalism," in *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, ed. A. Motyl (San Diego, CA: Academia Press, 2001).
- <sup>39</sup>See, for instance, A. Misra, "A Nation in Exile: Tibetan Diaspora and the Dynamics of Long-Distance Nationalism," *Asian Ethnicity* 4:2 (2003): 189-206; A. Wise, "Embodying Exile: Trauma and Collective Identities among East Timorese Refugees in Australia," *Social Analysis* 48:3 (2004): 24-39.
- <sup>40</sup>S. Pryke, "British Serbs and Long Distance Nationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26:1 2003: 152-172.
- <sup>41</sup>G. Schiller and G. Fouron quoted in D. A. Thomas, "Politics beyond Boundaries: A Review Essay of Current Works on Nationalism, Migration, and Cultural Production within the Black Atlantic World," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 11 (2004): 265-283.
- <sup>42</sup>S. J. Tambiah, "Transnational Movements, Diaspora and Multiple Identities," *Daedalus: Journal of Arts and Sciences* 129:1 (2000): 163-194, 171.
- <sup>43</sup>T. Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 313.
- <sup>44</sup>C. Bhatt and P. Mukta, "Hindutva in the West: Mapping the Antinomies of Diaspora Nationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23:3 (2000): 407-441.
- <sup>45</sup>J. Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9:3 (1994): 302-338, 307.
- <sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 313.
- <sup>47</sup>F. Anthias, "Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity?" *Sociology* 32:3 (1998): 557-580, J. Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9:3 (1994): 302-338.
- <sup>48</sup>B. S. A. Yeoh and K. Willis, "'Heart' and 'Wing', Nation and Diaspora: Gendered Discourses in Singapore's Regionalization Process," *Gender, Place and Culture* 6:4 (1999): 355-372.
- <sup>49</sup>Respectively, F. Anthias, "Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity?" *Sociology* 32:3 (1998): 557-580; G. Gopinath, "Bombay, UK, Yuba City: Bhangra Music and the Engendering of Diaspora," *Diaspora* 4:3 (1995): 303-322; S. Gold, "Gender and Social Capital among Israeli Immigrants in Los Angeles," *Diaspora* 4:3 (1995): 267-301.
- <sup>50</sup>J. Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9:3 (1994): 302-338, 313-314.
- <sup>51</sup>P. Werbner, "The Place Which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28:1 (2002): 119-133; D. Kostovicova and A. Prestreshi., "Education, Gender and Religion: Identity Transformations among Kosovo Albanians in London," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29:6 (2003): 1079-1096.
- <sup>52</sup>H. Ramji, "Engendering Diasporic Identities," in *South Asian Women in the Diaspora*, ed. N. Puwar (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003), 227-242.
- <sup>53</sup>D. Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case," *Feminist Studies* 13:2 (1987): 317-338.
- <sup>54</sup>S. Walby, "Woman and Nation," in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. G. Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 1996), 235-254.

<sup>55</sup> N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias, "Woman-Nation-State," in *Nationalism*, eds. J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1475-1488.

<sup>56</sup> For the 'nationalization' of women through state policies, see for example, Z. Arat, "Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition," in *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East*, eds. S. Göçek and S. Balaghi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 95-112; Z. Arat, "Educating the Daughters of the Republic," in *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*, ed. Z. Arat (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 157-180; R. Kanaaneh, *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); M. Hatem, "The Pitfalls of the Nationalist Discourses on Citizenship in Egypt," in *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*, ed. S. Joseph (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 33-57; L. Kerber, "May All Our Citizens Be Soldiers and All Our Soldiers Citizens: The Ambiguities of Female Citizenship in the New Nation," in *Women, Militarism, and War: Essays in History, Politics, and Social Theory*, eds. J. B. Elshtain and S. Tobias (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), 89-103; R. Tsagarousianou, "'God, Patria and Home': 'Reproductive Politics' and Nationalist (Re)Definitions of Women in East/Central Europe," *Social Identities* 1:2 (1995): 283-296.

<sup>57</sup> See for example, K. Jayawedena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986); M. Badran, "Dual Liberation: Feminism and Nationalism in Egypt," *Feminist Issues* (Spring 1988): 15-34.

<sup>58</sup> Respectively, see D. Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler* [Concubines, Sisters and Citizens: Identities and Social Transformation] (İstanbul: Metis Kadın Araştırmaları, 1997); P. Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, eds. K. Sangari and S. Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 233-253; P. Chatterjee, "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India," *American Ethnologist* 16:4 (1989): 622-633; K. E. Fleming, "Women as Preservers of the Past: Ziya Gökalp and Women's Reform," in *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*, ed. Z. Arat (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 127-138.

<sup>59</sup> N. Sirman, "Kadınların Milliyeti" [The Nationality of Women] in *Milliyetçilik: Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce (Cilt 4)* [Political Thought in Modern Turkey (Vol.4)], eds. T. Bora ve M. Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 226-244.

<sup>60</sup> S. Neluka, "'Mothers, Daughters and 'Whores' of the Nation': Nationalism and Female Stereotypes in Post-Colonial Sri Lankan Drama in English," *Journal of Gender Studies* 6:3 (1997): 269-277.

<sup>61</sup> E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 101.

<sup>62</sup> F. Anthias, "Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity?" *Sociology* 32:3 (1998): 557-580, 573-574.

<sup>63</sup> K. Ganguly, "Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood," *Cultural Studies* 6:1 (1992): 27-49, 38.

<sup>64</sup> One silent fault line among the Circassians in Turkey today is the question of whether Circassians were exiled or if they migrated in a semi-voluntary manner. Though this fault line is not much voiced among Circassians, since the 1990s the Caucasian associations and some Circassian nationalists have preferred the exile discourse, and called it the "Great Circassian Exile" (*Büyük Çerkes Sürgünü*), which has been symbolically commemorated every year, on May 21<sup>st</sup>. In the last decade, statements on Circassian exile became public notices in some nationwide newspapers. One of these statements declares:

Up until this day, we have survived, fought and died for others. Up until this day, we have become the heroes for others' ideologies, religions, aims and interests. Up until today, we have song the songs of others', played their games. Up until today, we have had others' dreams. From now on, we are asking ourselves: will that continue? Will we be indifferent to our removal from history? Will we be quiet while all of our tribes are disappearing like the Ubykhs? The Black Sea was a sea of death and exile for us. We want to reconcile with the Black Sea. We want to reconcile with our history and geography. We want to reconcile with ourselves, our culture and we want to exist. We want our songs and our dreams. (From the *Declaration of the Democratic Circassian Platform* (DCP), on May 19 and 20, 2001 that was published in *Radikal* with the financial support of several Circassians, [translated from Turkish by the author].)

As additional information, Ubykhs is a Circassian tribe whose language is no longer spoken. The documentary *Son Sesler* [Last Utterances] produced by İsmet Arasan in 1988 deals with the end of the Ubykh language and "the creepy loneliness of the last Ubykh, Tevfik Esenç who is the only Ubykh who can speak the Ubykh language". (<http://www.intersinema.com/haber/haber.asp?id=880>) With the death of Esenç, Ubykh became a dead language.

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According to one account, the mass migration of the Circassians in 1864 by sea led to the death of one third of the people who fled their native country, which is estimated to be 1.2 million. (McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995, 36) The conditions of their displacement, travel by sea instead of land in most of the cases, the diseases. etc. have been the starting point of the monologue of Circassians with the Black Sea. Several Circassians in Turkey today refer to their older relatives who refuse to eat fish from the Black Sea because of their bitter memories of the Exodus. In these narratives, the Black Sea is regarded as the space within which exodus, the miseries of emigration and a high number of deaths took place. More than a hundred years later, the fish of the Black Sea are regarded as having been fed by the flesh of dead people whose graves were the Black Sea. Symbolically the act of passing the Black Sea is regarded as the transformation of Circassians into an exile community that defines itself mostly through multiple and simultaneous lacks, i.e., homeland, nation, nationalism, state, political power. Hence the demand "to reconcile with the Black Sea" in the text is no coincidence.

<sup>65</sup> Although one can say that Circassians in Turkey is larger than Circassian diasporas settled in other countries by comparing the number of Circassian associations in them, the exact number of people calling themselves Circassian in Turkey is not known today. Though it is an invalid indicator of the population, the latest official number that we have comes from the 1965 census within which 58,339 of the respondents declared Circassian as the mother tongue, 55,030 as the secondary one while 4563 of the respondents declared Abkhazian as the mother tongue and 7836 as the secondary one. (P. A. Andrews, *Türkiye'de Etnik Gruplar* [Ethnic Groups in Turkey] (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1992) 236-237. Yet, since 1965 no census in Turkey has included these questions. To overcome this handicap, before a census in early 2000s, some diaspora nationalists through e-mail groups suggested stating that they spoke Circassian language in the census when they were asked the foreign languages they spoke so that Circassians would/could have some rough idea about their population. However, the question on the spoken languages was not included in the last census. Therefore, one strategy to overcome the lack of demographical information for Circassians was not successful. The claims on the number of Circassians living in Turkey range between two million and seven million.

<sup>66</sup> None of these associations bear the name "Circassian" due to legal prohibitions.

<sup>67</sup> Though not very common, in one instance the entire proceeding of the activity was filmed. The activity was the congress of North Caucasians held under the intentionally unassuming title of '125<sup>th</sup> Year Culture Week' on October 21-27 in 1989 within which the delegates reached a consensus to seek repatriation in the Caucasus, to coordinate efforts among the scattered Circassian communities and to ensure the ongoing inter-communication of such groups. (See L. Bezanis, "Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey," *Central Asian Survey* 13:1 (1994): 59-180; see also, J. Colarusso, "Circassian Repatriation: When Culture is Stronger than Politics," *The World and I* (Washington, DC: Washington Times Publishing Corporation, 1991): 656-669.

<sup>68</sup> L. Bezanis, "Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey," *Central Asian Survey* 13:1 (1994): 59-180, 141.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> S. Shami, "Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 617-646, 624.

<sup>71</sup> A. Toumarkine, "Balkan and Caucasian Immigrant Associations: Community and Politics," in *Civil Society in the Grip of Nationalism: Studies on Political Culture in Contemporary Turkey*, eds. S. Yerasimos, G. Seufert, and K. Vorhoff (Würzburg, Germany: Ergon Verlag, 2000), 403-432, 405.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> See A. Toğuzata, *Çerkes Ezgileri* [Circassian Melodies] (İstanbul: Ada Muzik, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> *Circassian Folk Songs* was also advertised on television, which is something totally novel for Circassian artifacts that have always been produced for in-group consumption. When it first appeared in the national market, there occurred some debates in the Circassian e-groups on how to make it more popular. One idea that was repetitively voiced was individually going to several music markets and asking whether or not they had it so that particular cassette/CD would appear popular.

<sup>75</sup> For instance, at the outbreak of the war in Abkhazia several Circassians (not only Abkhazians) were immediately gathered at the Abkhazian Association in Istanbul. The association was turned into a headquarters from where communication and political connections with Abkhazia were managed.

<sup>76</sup> Shami, *Op. cit.*, 643.

<sup>77</sup> For the naturalization of links between people and place through botanical metaphors see L. Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars

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and Refugees" in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 52-74.

<sup>78</sup>Throughout the encounters with those relatives in the homeland in the early 1990s which took place either in Turkey or Caucasia, apart from the information regarding the families to fill out and complete "the family trees", I, as a child remember that gum, socks, vodkas, chocolates filled with liqueur, and Noël adornments were exchanged as gifts between newly found relatives.

<sup>79</sup>See for instance, S. Çelik and H. Karadeniz, "Türkiye'deki Çerkesler: Kafdağına Dönsek mi?" ["Circassians in Turkey: Shall We Return to Kafdağı (the Mythical Mountain)?"] *İkibine Doğru*, 12 March 1989, 11; A. Görmüş, "Çerkesler: Kafkasya'ya Dönüyoruz," ["Circassians: We are Returning to the Caucasus"] *Nokta*, 17 June 1990, 24; "Türkiye'deki Çerkesler Kafkasya'ya Göçüyor," ["Circassians in Turkey Are Emigrating to the Caucasus"] *Milliyet*, 28 April 1991; "Çerkesler Kafkasya'ya Dönüyor," ["Circassians in Turkey Are Returning to the Caucasus"] *Ekonomist*, 28 April 1991, 17; U. Ertem, "Çerkesler'e 'Dön' Çağrısı," ["The Call of Return to Circassians"] *Güneş*, 19 June 1991; M. Uçar, "Çerkeslere Davet," ["Invitation to Circassians"] *Milliyet*, 12 November 1991; Z. Erdal and E. Özcan, "Türkiye'deki Çerkeslerden 'Gelin!' Çağrısına Yanıt: 'Gideriz, Ama...,'" ["The Reply of Circassians in Turkey to the Invitation to Come: 'We Will Go But...'"] *Milliyet*, 12 November 1991; H. Soysü, "Çerkesler'de 'Kafkasya'ya Kesin Dönüş' Tartışmaları," [The Debates of Final Return to the Caucasus among Circassians] *İkibine Doğru*, 12 January 1992.

<sup>80</sup>See for instance, J. Colarusso, "Circassian Repatriation: When Culture is Stronger than Politics," *The World and I*, Washington, DC: Washington Times Publishing Corporation, 1991), 656-669.

<sup>81</sup>S. Shami, "Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 617-646, 630.

<sup>82</sup>In addition to former *Kaf-Der* and *Kaf-Fed*, the two other major associations are *Kafkas Vakfı* and *Birleşik Kafkas Derneği*, both of which are relatively Islamic-oriented. Also there are minor micro-ethnic associations, for the Ossetians, the Alan Culture and Support Foundation established 1989 in Istanbul, 1993 in Ankara and 1997 in Izmir; and for Abkhazians, the Abkhazian Cultural Association in Istanbul.

<sup>83</sup>For a review of the recent debates concerning language, see Z. Besleney, "Race Against Time for Circassian in Turkey: Can the North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey Grasp An Opportunity to Revive Their Historic Languages?" *CRS* 225 (April 2004).

<sup>84</sup>A. Kaya, "Political Participation Strategies of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey," *Mediterranean Politics*, 9:2 (2004): 221-239, 221.

<sup>85</sup>See for instance, M. Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* [Kurdish Problem in the State Discourse] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999); W. Jwaideh, *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihi Kökenleri ve Gelişimi* [The Historical Origins and Development of Kurdish Nationalism] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999); K. Kirişçi and G. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); E. J. Zürcher, ed., *Türkiye'de Etnik Çatışma: İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete* [Ethnic Conflict in Turkey: From Empire to the Republic] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2005).

<sup>86</sup>See for instance, A. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme' Politikaları* [Wealth Tax and Politics of 'Turkification'] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001); R. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni* [Jews of Turkey in Republican Years: An Adventure of Turkification] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999); "Bir Zamanlar Ermeniler Vardı!.." sayısı [The special volume "Once There Were Armenians", *Birikim* 194 (2005)]; Y. Koçoğlu, *Hatırlıyorum* [I Remember] (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003).

<sup>87</sup>I thank the editor of this chapter, Alice Horner not only for her thorough editing but also for making me realize that the frequently used statement of Circassians that "Circassians do not beat their wives" automatically associates Circassian with the male.

<sup>88</sup>I do not consider silence as an automatic expression of female oppression but rather as a contradiction with the Circassian discourse on the freedom of Circassian woman. I argue that this discourse on freedom and voluntary female silence coupled with female invisibility in the public sphere itself works as the formations of diaspora nationalism of Circassians in Turkey.

<sup>89</sup>N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias, "Woman-Nation-State," in *Nationalism*, eds. J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1475-1488.

<sup>90</sup>For the details and implications of quite similar nationalist gender constructions in colonial contexts, see P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and The Colonial World* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); P. Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, eds. K. Sangari and S. Vaid (New Brunswick, NJ Rutgers University Press, 1990).



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<sup>91</sup> S. J. Tambiah, "Transnational Movements, Diaspora and Multiple Identities," *Daedalus: Journal of Arts and Sciences* 129:1 (2000): 163-194, 170.

<sup>92</sup>This image is partly related to the historical fact that throughout 19th century Circassians had been the human stock of Ottoman slave market. (See H. Erdem, *Osmanlı'da Köleliğin Sonu:1800-1909* [The End of Slavery in Ottoman Empire:1800-1909] (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004, 80.) The other factor that contributed to the formation of the image of the Circassian girl is the existence of a high number of Circassian women in the Ottoman Palace. However the image itself is not limited to Ottoman lands but also has its parallels in the European orientalist literature in 19th century. (See I.C.Schick, *Çerkes Güzeli: Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Serüveni* [The Fair Circassian: Adventures of an Orientalist Motif] (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2004).

<sup>93</sup>See for instance, U. Tavkul, "Milli Mücadele Dönemine Ait Önemli Bir Belge: Çerkes Milletinin Düvel-i Muazzama ve Alem-i İnsaniyet ve Medeniyete Umumi Beyanname," [An Important Document from the Era of National Struggle: The Declaration of Circassian Nation to Great Nations and World of Humanity] accessed August 2005, accessible at [http://www.bkd.org.tr/tarih/umumi\\_beyanname.asp](http://www.bkd.org.tr/tarih/umumi_beyanname.asp); M. Ünal, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Çerkeslerin Rolü* [The Role of Circassians in the War of Independence] (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1996).

<sup>94</sup> Çerkes Ethem was a militia leader of Circassian origin who fought against the Allied powers during the First World War and the War of Independence that followed it. As he and his soldiers worked for the suppression of the early revolts in Anatolia and consolidation of the new government, in 1921 he was politically liquidated. After 1921 his name was associated with treason.

<sup>95</sup>W. Hale, *Türkiye'de Ordu ve Siyaset* [The Army and Politics in Turkey] (İstanbul: Hil Yayın, 1996), 67.

<sup>96</sup>Ironically, Çerkes Ethem was also unhappy about the label "Çerkes" that was associated with his name. He states: "There were several Circassian commanders which I served. They were not called Circassian. The way they use to call me, the label Circassian has been one of the injustices that I have been exposed throughtout my life." C. Kutay in C. Şener, *Çerkes Ethem Olayı* [Çerkes Ethem Affair] (İstanbul: Okan Yayınları, 1986), 119.

## THE CIRCASSIANS IN TURKEY: AN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC SAMPLING

*Cahit Aslan*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Although every country has its unique conditions, the socio-demographic data about the Circassians living in the eastern Mediterranean region of Turkey can be viewed as a representative sampling for Turkey or even a sampling of all of the Circassian Diaspora because the majority of Circassians in the world presently live in Turkey.

The data analyzed in this chapter were obtained through surveys conducted by the Adana Caucasian Cultural Society in 2004-2005 as part of a project supported by the Representation of the European Commission to Turkey. Data from 5 cities (Adana, Mersin, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Antakya), 4 districts (Ceyhan, Tufanbeyli, Göksun, Reyhanlı) and 36 villages or small towns were obtained by face-to-face interviews with 2236 families.

In the interpretation of the research findings, the survey data were analyzed in three categories: (1) socio-demographic substructures, (2) building Circassian collective identity, and (3) Circassians and the political process.

### Socio-demographic Substructures

There are very speculative arguments about the numbers of the Circassians in Turkey. These numbers have been estimated from 1.5 million to 7 million. Yet, the general consensus is that the Circassian population in Turkey is about 5 million. Today North Caucasians – mostly including Adyghe and Abkhaz-Abazin groups – live in “43 city centers and 143 districts, and 893 villages of Turkey.”<sup>2</sup> About 10% of this population is in the eastern Mediterranean region of Turkey. The Circassians in this region differ very slightly from the Turkish population in terms of demographic features. Some examples: According to the mean age of the population, Circassians are relatively older than the Turkish population in general. Also, while the gender distribution for Turks favors males, it favors females among Circassians. As for marital status, the Circassians marry later. On other hand, the educational status of the Circassians is higher than that of Turkish population in general. Indeed, the further one moves from east to west in Turkey, the more Circassians start to resemble average Turkish citizens.

According to the findings of this study, the experiences of the Circassians in Anatolia have taken place mostly in rural areas. Within their rural settlements, the Circassians have been able to protect their language and culture. But the process of urbanization in Turkey has also influenced the Circassians as it has other ethnic groups. As a result of urbanization, Circassian villages have seen the out-migration of most of their population to urban areas. On one hand, while Circassians struggle today to maintain their existence through socio-economic activities like the people in other Anatolian villages, on the other hand, they also struggle to preserve their traditional way of life, which is their distinguishing characteristic. The process of urbanization in Turkey causes very rapid changes from a patriarchal, extended family structure to a nuclear family structure among Circassians. Often the traditional way of life and identity that the Circassians reproduced within patriarchal families becomes diminished in nuclear families.

As a group, the Circassians display more evident differences than the mean of Turkey in terms of socio-economic indicators. For example, compared to mean of Turkey, more Circassians reside in large houses. The houses of the Circassians living in urban areas are in middle class sections. The number of appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers, refrigerators and communication instruments such as telephones and Internet access that can be found per hundred Circassian

families is higher than the mean of Turkey. In terms of the number of privately owned cars, the figure is a little bit lower than the mean of Turkey but the number of tractors is a little bit higher.

According to income distribution figures, the Circassians can be considered typically middle class. However, income dissatisfaction of Circassians is rather higher than the mean of Turkey. The employment rate and occupations of Circassians are fairly near to the mean of Turkey.

As for the use of their mother tongue, it seems that the use of Circassian has been eroding. The number of the Circassians using and learning their mother tongue in urban areas is less than that of rural areas. In particular, both urbanization and weaknesses in socio-economic organizations negatively influence both using the mother tongue and maintaining traditions. For example, each new generation learns less of their mother tongues. Generally, their rate of using the mother tongue in the family lessens with each passing day. The rate of speaking the mother tongue at home (56.7%, "often" and "always"), and the rate of generally knowing the mother tongue (58.7%) are close to one another. From these numbers, it is understood that the frequency of speaking the mother tongue in the family has an important role in the preservation of language. In addition, the degree to which Circassians preserve their mother tongue is connected to the size and density of their population. Namely, the more the Circassians are together, the more they preserve their mother tongue. Furthermore, if the families make an effort to attach importance to, and to believe in the necessity of learning the mother tongue, this can increase the number of people who know it and take classes in the mother tongue.

The Circassians have been organized, primarily into cultural groups and other ethnic associations, in Anatolia for almost 100 years. Most of them are committed to these organizations and have a positive attitude about them. In spite of this, being organized into such interest groups has not been sufficiently widespread among the Circassians. One of the most important barriers to overcome is that the association and societies Circassians have established are not widespread enough to serve their needs. If these organizations increase sufficiently, they will contribute greatly to sustaining the language, culture, and identity of the Circassians. On the other hand, changes in both the urban and rural structures of Turkey influence not only Turkish socio-cultural conditions but also that of the Circassians in Turkey. While rural Circassian villages can continue to sustain traditions, urbanized Circassians can participate in culturally oriented NGOs.

### **Building Circassian Collective Identity**

The formation of a collective identity of the Circassians in particular and of North Caucasians in general has been shaped as a result of historical events and population movements. Today, peoples living in the North Caucasus can be grouped into two: the autochthon and the outsiders. The autochthon group can further be divided into two groups: autochthon peoples recorded in Byzantine, Roman, Genoese, and Greek sources who have been known to reside in the area since 5000 BC; and peoples who migrated from the east in the 4th to 12th centuries AD and settled in the area during the "Immigration of the Tribes". The autochthon peoples included Adyghe-Abkhaz groups living in the western and middle Caucasus, Chechen-Ingush groups living in the eastern Caucasus, and groups living in Daghestan region (such as the Andi, Avar, Lak, Lezgi, etc.). Peoples who were nativized were the Karachi, Balkar, Nogai, Kumyk of Turan origin, and Ossets of Iranian origin. However, we can say that these groups had developed similarities based in sharing a common destiny and consequently formed the cultural network of the northern Caucasus (Tavkul, 1998). The outsiders, on the other hand, consist of Russian Cossacks, Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Greeks, Jews (who inhabited the area after the Caucasian wars) and, for the last 20 years, Kurds. For that reason, "Circassian identity" is both a general term covering *all* northern Caucasian peoples, whether autochthon or nativized, as well as denoting the Adyghe groups in particular. At present, people in Anatolia use the term Circassian in its general meaning covering all ethnic groups who migrated from

the northern Caucasus. On the other hand, those who live in the northern Caucasus use the same term for people living in Karachay-Cherkessia. In fact, Circassians call themselves "Adyghe" as a tribe and the term is limited to those living in Adygei Republic. Kabardians, a subgroup that speaks a Circassian dialect, are known by the same name in the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. If we want to attribute a common name for these tribes that were divided artificially during the Stalin political era, it would be "Circassian." However, classifying Chechen-Ingushes, Asetins-Ossets, and other Turanian groups under the same identity results in a significant shift in connotation. For example, although Abkhazians are related to Adyghes historically, they describe themselves as outside of Circassian identity. Yet in spite of these nuances, historical events created a common destiny among the peoples of the North Caucasus and the interactions among them created a common cultural identity of being northern Caucasian that united them. In the diaspora process, there have been further shifts between dominating identities. A typical example of this phenomenon has been observed among eastern Mediterranean Caucasians.

In order to investigate the components of the identity of Northern Caucasians living in the eastern Mediterranean region, we asked the survey participants to indicate how close they felt to the identity they chose from the following list: Muslim, Arab, Turkish, Circassian, Adyghe, Ubikh, Abkhazian, Chechen, Karachai, Lezgi, Avar, Asetin, Caucasian, and European. They declared how close they felt to the identity that they chose on a scale of one hundred.

The results show that the most commonly cited identity on the list was **Muslim**. 1936 people (86.5%) stated that being Muslim was a one hundred percent indicator of their identity. In addition, Circassian (78.3%), Adyghe (77.5%), Caucasian (52.8%), and Turkish (34.8%) identities were also selected by the participants of the study. Regarding this category, 91% of Abkhazians indicated that they felt themselves one hundred percent Muslim and the entire sample considers themselves as Muslim at 50% and above. 86.7% of Adyghes felt an attachment to this identity at 100% and 98.8% of them indicated a level of 50% and above. Whereas 74.5% of Avars responded that being Muslim is a 100% indicator of their identity, all of them stated the rate of considering being Muslim as an indicator of identity at 50 percent and above. 82.1% of Chechens felt 100% Muslim and for 98.2% of them, being Muslim was rated at 50% or greater.

798 people (35.6% of the whole sample) chose **Turkish** as their identity. 34.8% of the group felt themselves Turkish at a level of 100%, and 69.9% felt Turkish at a level of 50% and above. When the different groups were considered, 23% of the Abkhazians, 36% of the Adyghes, 13.7% of the Avars, and 40.4% of the Chechens felt 100% Turkish. On the other hand, 69.9% of the Abkhazians, 68.8% of the Adyghes, 62.7% of the Avars, and 83.3% of the Chechens felt Turkish at a level of 50% and above. Finally, 25.4% of the Avars indicated no attachment to Turkish identity.

1374 people (61.4% of the whole sample) chose **Circassian** as the main component of their identity. 78.3% of the sample indicated Circassian as their main identity at a 100% level. The distribution of the groups who chose Circassian as their main identity at the 100% level was 80.5% of the Abkhazians and 81.3% of the Adyghes. All of the Abkhazians and 97.6% of the Adyghes felt themselves to be Circassian at a level of 50% and above.

On the other hand, none of the Chechens or Avars felt themselves Circassian at the 100% level. However, 79.1% of the Chechens and only 0.8% of the Avars indicated Circassian at a level of 50% and above. What is more, 85% of the Chechens did not consider themselves Circassian and 75.4% of the Adyghes did not show any attachment to Avar identity.

By contrast, the percentage of **Ubikhes** who indicated that they were Circassians at 100% was 79.2 and the percentage of those who rated themselves as purely Ubikhes was 77.8. The percentage of Ubikhes who chose this identity at 50% or above was 95.3. Additionally, 96.2% of the 364 participants (40% of the sample) chose **Abkhaz** identity. 80.9% of Abkhazians (consisting of 131

people who made up 81.3% of all Abkhazians in the study population) considered themselves Abkhazian at a 100% level. On the other hand, 98.4% of them rated themselves Abkhazian at 50% and above.

As for **Adyghes**, 52.8% of the sample (1182 people or 70.3% of the whole group in the survey population) chose this identity, 80.6% at a 100% level and 97.2% at 50% and above. Additionally, 39 people from the Abkhaz group also indicated that they felt themselves Adyghes at the 50% and above level.

The category of **Chechen** was chosen as an identity by 408 people (18.2% of the sample), 175 of who were of Chechen origin (they represented 82.5% of all Chechens in the sample). 75.4% of these 175 people saw themselves Chechen at the 100% level and 97.7% indicated that they were Chechen at 50% or above. Additionally, 183 people of Adyghes origin (10.8% of all Adyghes in the sample) also responded to this item and 57.9% indicated that they did not feel Chechen.

273 people (12.2% of the sample), 103 of who were of **Avar** origin selected the Avar choice and represented 70% of all the Avars in the research population. 68.8% of them indicated that they felt Avar at a 100% level and 95.1% indicated that they were Avar at 50% and above. An Avar sub-group chose being Muslim as their first indicator of identity and being Avar after it.

As for identity of **Caucasian**, 869 people (38.8% of the sample) chose this identity. 93.4% of 46 Abkhazians, 90.7% of 650 Adyghes, 97.3% of 75 Avars, and 94.5% of 73 Chechens indicated that they identified themselves as Caucasian at a level of 50% and above.

The number of people who chose the item being **European** was low with 344 people (15.3% of the sample) choosing this item. 51.7% of 263 Adyghes indicated that they felt themselves European at a level of 50% and above. On the other hand, 34% (90 people) stated that they did not feel European at all.

The results illustrate that the dominant indicators of identity in this population are being Muslim and being Circassian. At the 100% level, Muslim identity was placed over all other collective identity indicators among people with northern Caucasian origins (according to the number of those answering the relevant question  $f=95.0$ ). The identity of being Caucasian was also highly collectively indicated. However, Circassian was more valid for Adyghes ( $f=93.5$ ) and Abkhazians ( $f=93.3$ ). These findings support the proposition that "Circassian identity, which covered almost all Northern Caucasian people of Islamic origin at the beginning of the 20th century, was abandoned first by Turanian-origin people from Karachai, Balkar, Kirim, and Daghestan in the 1980s, and later by Chechens in the 1990s" (Kaya, 2005).

Similarly, being Turkish also contributes to the identity of people coming from the northern Caucasus (among the ones who chose this item  $f=58.4$ ; among whole population  $F=117$ ). Significantly, 70% of those who feel themselves Turkish at a level of 50% and above both understand and speak their mother tongues. They also consider being able to speak their mother tongue "very important" and "always important."

According to these results, we can say on the one hand that there has been erosion of some identity levels, yet on the other hand, Muslim, Circassian, Caucasian, and Turkish identities have been adapted to one another, albeit in a hierarchical order.

Being Muslim constitutes the most important identity in the hierarchy of identities according to research findings, followed by Circassian-Adyghes identities. These results also correspond to historical facts behind the exile of the Circassians from the northern Caucasus. Additionally, although Circassian identity encompasses all of the Adyghes, the Abkhazians also associate themselves with a Circassian identity. On the other hand, Chechens, Avars, and Ossets carry on distinct Chechen, Avar, and Osset identities, respectively. As has been noted, "Adyghes, Abkhazians, and Chechens, who

formerly identified themselves as diasporic Circassians, have been going through an important transformation in their ethnic identity” (Kaya, 2005). In the meantime, they also constitute part of Anatolian ethnic identity without contradiction or conflict. As has been observed in the field, Turkish identity does not come from ethnic origin; rather, it is more behavioral and covers Anatolization. At the same time, it is a function of political processes, including the inclusive nature of Turkish citizenship.

Both socio-political processes and urbanization have had an assimilative effect on Circassian society that negatively impacts its language and culture. They also influence origin-collective identity. Islam, which has had an important role in the integration of Circassians into Turkish society, has also become a dominant component of collective identity. On the one hand, Circassian, as an origin-identity, preserves its place as a dominant identity marker. On the other hand, belonging to one of the tribes of the northern Caucasus also finds its members a place among collective identities. However, Circassian identity is only claimed by Adyghes, not by northern Caucasus tribes such as the Avars and Chechens. Additionally, all peoples with a northern Caucasus origin also have gone through a process of gaining Turkish identity, which is a result of ideological-identity integration.

Changes both in the hierarchy of identities and the use of mother tongues influence Circassian culture. *Khabze* behavioral rules, which constitute the moral core of traditional Circassian life, have also undergone changes and have been minimized by assimilation so that consequently, social control has been loosened. However, these rules still contribute to identity formation. To a large extent, Circassians are aware of the need to preserve their language and the hardships in maintaining traditional values and practices. At this point, what they need are effective ethnic organizations and media.

### **Circassians and the Political Process**

To understand the place of Circassians as Turkish citizens in the Anatolian region as well as their political attitudes and political affiliations in Turkish society, we asked the participants to give us a sense of where their families were on the political spectrum – following a scale from extreme rightist to extreme leftist – which party they had voted for in the November 3, 2002 parliamentary elections, and which party they would vote for if there was an election that day. Of the 1290 persons (57.7% of the sample) who answered the question “Where is your family generally on the political spectrum?” 38.1% of them stated that their families had a rightist tendency, 21.4% were moderate-medium, 15.5% were conservative, 9.3% were social-democrat, 7.4% had a tendency to be leftist, 3.6% were described as nationalist, 2.2% were idealist (*ülküçü*) and 0.8% were other=democrat.

Therefore, according to the data in hand, the Circassians are mostly in the center of the political spectrum in Turkish society. Crosstabs and correlation relations according to family residence in rural areas versus urban areas display significant differences. 12.4% of the families from rural areas have a tendency to be leftist, 26.0% of the urban families are leftist. In contrast, while 31.7% of the families from urban areas have a tendency to be rightist, 53.3% of the families from rural areas have a tendency to be rightist.

If we look at the correlation between “Circassian identification” and political tendency, it is possible to say that “Circassian identification” is observed among people from all political affiliations. In other words, the Circassians in Turkey have varied political tendencies: 84.4% of persons who are politically leftist, 81.2% of them who are politically rightist, and 80.8% of them who are moderate-medium have a Circassian identity at 81%-100% level as their Circassian upper identity. Therefore, they are people whose Circassianness is also shaped by these political tendencies.

The most concrete example of this political spectrum was the 3 November 2002 election held for parliament. The sample was asked which party they had chosen in the election. 51.1% of the sample (1142 persons) answered this question. From a political viewpoint, the first choice of the Circassians

was the conservative AKP (Justice and Progress Party), which 65.0% supported in this election. Second was the social democrat party, the CHP (Republic People Party) and 14.6% voted for it. The nationalist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) was third with 5.7% of the vote and fourth was the centrist DYP (True Path Party) with 3.5% of the vote. Based upon these results, it appears that the Circassians are politically rightist, conservative Islamic, and social democratic in sequence. This pattern paralleled the national results of the general election: AKP, CHP, DYP and MHP.<sup>3</sup>

When the moderate political tendencies of Circassian families are considered, it follows that Circassians recognized in the AKP a new alternative as it is a centrist party. But in addition, Circassians placed Islam at the top of their identity hierarchy and the AKP was a logical choice because of its Islamic discourse.

In this election, the majority of votes were split between the AKP and the CHP in both the Circassian sample and in the general Turkish results. But there were important differences in the voting patterns between the Circassian sample and the general results. In particular, the majority of Circassian votes in the eastern Mediterranean region were for the AKP. Moreover, when the distribution of votes at the regional level is evaluated, there are significant regional differences among Circassians. For example, while the Circassians voted for the AKP in the Kahramanmaraş region, they voted CHP in the Hatay region. This determination extends to results of the general election, too. Thus, Circassian political preferences are not uniform across ethnic lines and can be determined by regional differences; accordingly, these are rational preferences, not ideological preferences.

The political attitudes of Circassians are similar to those generally held in Turkey. Overall, they may be considered conservative with many Circassians in the middle of the political spectrum and a significant number of them to the left of middle.

On the other hand, political differences among Circassians may weaken their shared Circassian identity, as well as its construction and reconstruction. At the same time, these differences may also influence the potential of Circassian organizations. If Circassian identity does not remain dominant for Circassians, these political differences will be able to break ties and cause misperceptions between the "motherland" (i.e., Circassia-North Caucasus) and the Diaspora over the course of time. Although the "Circassians had undertaken important missions in both the Ottoman Empire's and the Turkish Republic's administrations,"<sup>4</sup> it has also been noted that "Circassian organizations and associations in Turkey, which are influential in Circassian identity politics, could not be effective in the political development of Turkey, particularly regarding its Caucasus policy, until recently" (Kaya, 2005).

Therefore, an overwhelming majority of Circassians feel closer to the Turkish "fatherland" than to the Caucasian "motherland." While being Circassian is considered a personal honor, this connection cannot be reinforced at the public level. For example, the respondents in the sample did not state their ethnic origins in their answers for the national census and official registers. Although there can be many causes for this, they generally explained their answers in the following ways.

37.8% of 319 persons answering this question stated their ethnic origins on public documents, but 62.2% of 523 persons did not state it. 65.8% of persons answering "yes" declared that in order to sustain cultural features you should maintain your cultural identity and 31% of them stated that in order to protect their cultural identity, they answered "yes." On the other hand, 25.2% of persons answering "no" (so, this rate is equal to 16.25% of persons answering this item, and 5.95% of the entire sample) stating that to be a Turkish citizen is enough of an upper identity and that they did not feel the need for another distinctive identity.

## Conclusions

*The Circassians have lived in Anatolia for 243 years with their distinctive way of life, have been integrated into the social and political structures of Turkey, and are respected citizens and an indispensable component of contemporary Turkish society. Circassian culture has been produced historically and the preservation of this culture can exist in harmony with the Circassians' citizenship status and not interfere with their civil and secular loyalties. Thus, their experiences in Anatolia have put them closer to the "fatherland" rather than to the "motherland." It can be said that the Circassians are oriented to the diaspora prospectively, are from Anatolia introspectively, and are from both Anatolia and the Caucasus retrospectively.*

Furthermore, dialectally, the concept of a motherland, including re-emigration there, and Circassian identity influence each other. In the same manner, the status of coming from the motherland is in line with how one perceives this. People who have the opinion that the Circassians were exiled rather believing that they emigrated for religious reasons strongly identify as Circassian. Therefore, although the conditions and some of the difficulties of re-emigration are discussed as a subject, the Circassians in the Diaspora do not think of determining their fate themselves, although they still retain the idea of re-emigration. If their ideas about their ancestral homeland become powerful enough and they are effective in Anatolia, they could develop from a semi group into an interest group. Otherwise, even though the Circassians participate in their organizations and associations, they will remain an ineffective group in Anatolia. If Circassian intellectuals succeed in transferring their knowledge of civic organization to the rural areas and if linguistic and cultural materials for promoting Circassian heritage are brought from rural to urban areas, Circassians will have a strong chance of preserving their unique culture and language. But if the necessary precautions are not taken, the Circassians in Anatolia will remain only in history books.

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## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.circassiancanada.com/tr/turizm/cerkes\\_koyleri](http://www.circassiancanada.com/tr/turizm/cerkes_koyleri), 12.06.2005.

<sup>3</sup> For the November 2002 election results, see the Turkish newspaper *Sabah*, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/>, also cf. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/europe/2392717.stm>.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Cemal Şener, <http://www.karacaahmet.org/makaleler>.

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**NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF MINORITIES:  
THE CIRCASSIANS IN TURKEY<sup>1</sup>**  
*Sigâh Şahin<sup>2</sup>*

**Introduction**

The Circassians – which, as the term is used in Turkey, is a collective name for several indigenous peoples of the North Caucasus – were forced to leave their ancestral territories in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after being defeated by Tsarist Russia in a war that had lasted more than a century. During their forced relocation, thousands of Circassians lost their lives due to numerous factors such as malnutrition, diseases and old age. Of the survivors, the majority of them settled in the part of the Ottoman Empire that is now Turkey, and to a lesser extent in Jordan and other Middle Eastern countries such as Israel and Syria.

Until today the descendants of these immigrants have not left Turkey, except for a very small group who have returned to their homeland. Even though the population has been in Turkey for quite some time, and even though the Turkish government is not tolerant towards minorities and ethnic groups – all people living in Turkey are Turks, no distinction is made<sup>3</sup> – and the Turkish culture and language has been penetrating deeply into the original Circassian culture, this population has somehow managed to preserve its interest in its heritage until the present. As Çetin Öner, writer and artist, formulates it: after filling our stomachs and letting the bloodstream into our brains, we started to investigate our culture, our history as researchers with Circassian roots.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the culture is dying a little with every new generation. The younger generations rarely speak Circassian; their parents did not make the effort to preserve Circassian language and culture, which in my view is an unfortunate development.

The legal protection of minorities is an issue that has received a considerable amount of attention and showed much development in recent years on an international, especially a European level, which shows its importance from a human rights perspective. In addition, the future accession of Turkey into the European Union has underscored this issue. Therefore, in this paper I will examine the Turkish government's conduct towards the Circassians, focusing especially on the legal status of this population and the rights that they enjoy within the legal system of Turkey. My aims are to illustrate what the Circassians have done to preserve their culture within Turkish society, to what degree this is possible within the Turkish legal climate; and to put Turkish conduct into international and European perspective, from a legal point of view, in order to determine whether international and European law may provide a solution for safeguarding our vanishing identity.

First, I will give an overview of the international and European standards on the protection of minorities, which will serve as a background to evaluate the situation in Turkey and which will also make clear why minority protection is such an important issue. It would go beyond the scope of this paper to describe every element regarding minority protection; rather it will suffice to give a basic idea about how minority protection operates beyond the national level. The legal status of the Circassians in Turkey will then be discussed and contrasted with other minority groups in Turkey. Next, I will focus on the rights that the Circassians enjoy. Regarding this matter, it is important to note that 'rights' and 'protection' are two different concepts: Legal rights are interests or goods, which are recognised by law; and recognition of these rights is a first step to their protection. So in that sense, protection is a broader concept and goes a step further.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to see whether or not the rights of the Circassians in Turkey, if any exist, are meant to protect them as a minority. Due to space limitations, I will restrict myself to political participation and language rights, since in my view these are the most important rights in the case of the Circassians, in order to save their culture from totally being absorbed and eventually disappearing.

## International and European Standards on Minority Protection

In the present day legal order, there exists a wide range of minority protection mechanisms, on an international level as well as for individual European countries.

### ***The International Level***

The current system on the international level finds its basis in the network of regulations that were introduced at the time of the League of Nations.<sup>6</sup> The territorial adjustments caused by the First World War resulted in the creation of minorities in the newly demarcated states. Therefore, the *Covenant of the League of Nations and Protection of Minorities* was adopted; however, this instrument did not specifically contain any minority rights; it merely recognizes the existence of these groups.

After the Second World War, the United Nations was established and took a very different approach to minority issues, in response to the failure of the League of Nations to prevent World War II. The awareness of the need for minority protection increased considerably, mainly because it had become clear that it was a matter that deserved special attention.<sup>7</sup> The 1948 *Declaration of the UN General Assembly* proclaimed that the UN could not be indifferent regarding minorities.<sup>8</sup> More recently, the UN reflected increased demand for the further protection of minorities by adopting the *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* in 1992. The Declaration states *inter alia* that the protection of minorities contributes to the political and social stability of the nations in which they live, and that it would also contribute to the strengthening of friendship and cooperation among peoples and states. The Declaration provides for rights for members of minority groups, such as the right to freely associate and the right to participate effectively in decisions concerning the minority to which they belong (Article 2). Although the capacity of a Declaration is not, from a legal point of view, as heavily weighted as a Treaty or Charter, its existence emphasizes the growing importance of the minority issue.

In addition, the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights was established. This body, initially called the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, which was the main subsidiary body of the UN Commission on Human Rights,<sup>9</sup> established the Working Group on Minorities in 1995, which served as a forum for dialogue in order to create more awareness of the different aspects of minority issues and to seek better understanding and mutual respect both on horizontal (among minorities) and vertical (between minorities and governments) levels.<sup>10</sup>

Besides these mechanisms, there are also a few references in general human rights instruments. Article 27 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which had inspired the General Assembly of the UN to adopt the Declaration mentioned earlier, grants members of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities rights to practice their culture and religion, and to use their language in community with other members of their group. Also, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has stated that: "respect for [minorities] is a condition *sine qua non* for democratic society."<sup>11</sup>

### ***The European Level***

Not only at the UN level, but also at the European level do minority issue play a considerable role. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)<sup>12</sup> adopted the concluding document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the CSCE in 1990, which sets out rights for minorities across the OSCE region and was widely regarded as a key element for the successful development of minority rights.<sup>13</sup> The document contains *inter alia*, besides the general obligation to create conditions for the promotion of the identity of minorities, their right to use their mother tongue; their right to assembly; and their right to establish and maintain their own educational, cultural and religious institutions. An important point brought forward by this document is that it is no longer up

to the state to define which minorities live on its territory and which individuals belong to it; it is the personal choice of an individual and this individual may not be disadvantaged due to this choice.

Another important European instrument is the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (FCNM), which the Council of Europe adopted in 1995. Two years later the UN established an Advisory Committee on Minorities, which functions in monitoring the implementation of the Framework Convention. The FCNM is the first legally binding multilateral instrument addressing the issue of minority rights, including the rights of linguistic minorities, thus creating obligations for member states to (help) promote, develop, show mutual respect, cooperate, tolerate and take effective measures towards minorities living on their territories, concerning the rights set out in the Framework Convention. It is meant to encourage stability, democratic security and peace in Europe. The main protection offered by the FCNM covers a wide range of issues, *inter alia* promotion of effective equality; promotion of conditions favouring the preservation and development of culture, religion, language and traditions; freedom of assembly, association, expression, thought, conscience and religion; access to and use of media; linguistic freedoms, use of one's own name in the minority language; education; learning and instruction in the minority language; freedom to set up educational institutions; participation in economic, cultural and social life; and prohibition of forced assimilation.

It has been observed that the overall implementation of the FCNM has been successfully effectuated by most member states (35 have ratified, 7 have only signed); however, on the substantial issue of its application in the states it is too early to tell.<sup>14</sup>

### ***The Term 'Minority'***

In order to apply the mentioned mechanisms, it must be made clear what is meant by the term 'minority.' What actually is a minority? The international community and European nations have been struggling with this question for quite some time. The UN asked Special Rapporteur Francesco Capotorti to conduct a study on the rights of minorities, with attention to the definition issue. Capotorti proposed the following definition of a minority:

"A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the state – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language."<sup>15</sup>

Numerous scholars have criticised this definition and argued for a broader definition.<sup>16</sup> The organs and organisations involved in the international and European law-making process have never agreed on one coherent definition of the term. The lack of a uniform definition was addressed by incorporating paragraph 32 to the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension, which provides that "to belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice and no disadvantage may arise from the exercise of such a choice." There have also been some recent doctrinal efforts to give a global and generally applicable definition of the term 'minority'.<sup>17</sup> However, all of these concepts have in common the understanding that a minority is a non-dominant, institutionalised group sharing a distinct cultural identity that it wishes to preserve.<sup>18</sup>

At present, there is still no officially-sanctioned, general definition of the term, which may be a reflection of the unwillingness of individual governments to recognize the legitimacy of minority issues, by delaying the adoption of international instruments or by narrowing the scope of any definition proposed,<sup>19</sup> which is a tactic by governments that frustrates the minority groups. The lack of a uniform definition leads to problems in applying the existing mechanisms by the international monitoring bodies. Consequently, states add declarations to the instruments of implementation themselves, usually limiting the scope of the instruments in the process.<sup>20</sup>

## The Legal Status of the Circassians in Turkey

There are a considerable number of ethnic groups in Turkey. The largest group are the Kurds, with an estimated population of 15 million, followed by the Circassians. Other ethnic and/or religious minority groups include Roma, Alevi, Laz, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Georgians, Volga Germans, Arabs (some of whom designate themselves by religion as Alevis, rather than as Arabs), Africans, Yazidis, Assyro-Chaldeans, Bahais, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians, Shia Muslims, and Jacobites (Syrian Church of Antioch).<sup>21</sup>

Although Turkey is a member of the UN, the OSCE and the CoE, and therefore must theoretically respect the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), it can be observed that there is no full compliance to their standards by the Turkish government. For instance, Turkey has not signed the Framework Convention and tries to restrict the application of Article 27 of the ICCPR.<sup>22</sup> Also, prior to entering the EU, Turkey has to comply with the so-called "Copenhagen Criteria," which include stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and – yes – respect for and protection of minorities.<sup>23</sup>

The conduct of Turkey may best be described as a continuation of its policy of *Turkification*, a form of cultural assimilation that fails to recognize individuals' rights to ethnic, national, and religious self-identification and that aims at forcing assimilation to a Turkish identity. The Turkish Constitution forms the basis of this policy; there is no reference to minorities; everyone is considered to be a Turk. It is interesting that the older Constitution of 1908 did provide the Circassians with a number of important civil rights. It was only after the proclamation of the Republic in 1918, that the Turkification process started, which was to the disadvantage of the Circassians and other ethnic groups. Article 10 of the 1918 Constitution guarantees all individuals 'equality before the law.' Discrimination on the grounds of language, race, colour, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief and religion is prohibited. Consequently, the Turkish legislator has made no laws whatsoever for the protection of minorities, which leads to denying formal recognition of minority groups; hindering access to the media; limiting political participation; violating freedom of expression (especially in their own language); impeding freedom of religion; refraining from facilitating freedom of movement and choosing a place of residence; and practicing or tolerating various other forms of direct and indirect discrimination.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the attempts of individuals to claim their rights or even to address the existence of a minority group have not been tolerated and existing national legislation has been used against them. For instance, the Kurdish newspapers *Özgür Halk* and *Özgür Gündem* were shut down in 2006, being accused of promoting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).<sup>25</sup> In these cases, the prosecution of the newspapers was justified under the Law on the Fight Against Terrorism,<sup>26</sup> which in fact restricted the freedom of expression of this group. A perhaps more vivid example is the Armenian issue; anyone who recognizes the past treatment of Armenians by the Turkish government as genocide is considered to be violating the penal code and 'inciting enmity or hatred among the population' as well as 'denigration of Turkishness'. Apparently, the balance between violating national provisions and important rights such as freedom of speech is distributed somewhat differently in Turkey than in, for example, Western European countries.

The reluctance to fully accept its duty to protect all of its minorities is based on the very restrictive definition of the term 'minority' held by the Turkish legislator. The Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923, which is the only source Turkey consults regarding the recognition and protection of minority groups, only refers to non-Muslim minorities. Turkey even further restricts the definition held in this Treaty, since in practice it has only been applied to Armenian Orthodox Christians, Greek Orthodox Christians and Jews. By bilateral agreement between Turkey and Bulgaria, the Lausanne provisions are also applied to ethnic Bulgarians in Turkey.<sup>27</sup> The application of this term is, due to its limited scope, in breach of international standards and consequently has the effect of denying minority rights to all groups except for the three groups mentioned above.

However, after Turkey was given the status of a candidate for accession to the European Union, some positive developments can be noted. Especially since the AKP party<sup>28</sup> came into power, Turkey has taken some significant steps towards meeting the Copenhagen Criteria. Many prohibitions have been lifted, especially regarding the non-Muslim minorities and the Kurdish community, who have long been treated as a danger to the unity of the state.<sup>29</sup>

### **Language Rights and Political Participation of the Circassians in Turkey**

Since the only officially recognized minorities are non-Muslim groups and the Circassians are Muslim, they therefore do not qualify for the specific minority rights provided for by the international and European instruments. But still, they have managed to preserve some aspects of their culture, at least throughout the last century. In doing so, language has been the most important element of their culture as well as their rights of association and freedom of assembly. In this section, the most important activities and organisations established by the Circassians in Turkey will be discussed.

#### ***Education and Language Rights***

Article 3 of the Turkish Constitution states that the language of Turkey is Turkish. Article 42 states that no language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institution of training or education, and that foreign language education will be determined by law. These provisions have been used to prevent any minority language education, private or public (with the exception of those minorities recognized under the Lausanne Treaty). Circassians have been repeatedly denied schools teaching in their language, or even the opportunity for their language to be an optional subject in schools in areas where they are a numerical majority. There are no language or literature departments in non-recognized minority languages at any university in Turkey.<sup>30</sup> The Circassians in Turkey recently started claiming more community rights including having their own language schools, unfortunately, simply allowing private courses will be insufficient to preserve the language.<sup>31</sup> Yet the Circassians are the co-founders of the Turkish Republic; many of them have played key roles at the side of Atatürk. They want the Turkish government to acknowledge their patriotic contribution and to support them by recognizing their special circumstances by opening Circassian-language schools and by that means to revive the language among younger generations.

One positive step is the repeal of a law that was adopted by the military regime of 1980-1983 that contravened obligations forthcoming from international agreements on the protection of minorities that Turkey was party to by banning the use of languages other than Turkish. The repeal was effectuated by the Turkish government, which realized that further efforts to impose uniformity would be counterproductive and would negatively influence its relationship with Europe, where the issue of protection of minorities had become an important part of the European Agenda. Soon Circassians started re-organizing and publishing again.<sup>32</sup>

Another issue linked to linguistic rights is the right to use ethnic names. Before the sixth harmonization package that amended the Registration Act (Census) was adopted by the Grand National Assembly on 15 July 2004, the use of Kurdish names was forbidden. This did not apply to the Circassians to the same extent, since there are many Circassians with Circassian names (including the author of this paper). The amendment allows for children to be given names that are not 'contrary to moral rules' and that do not 'offend the public.'<sup>33</sup>

#### ***Political Participation and Freedom of Association***

The political participation strategy of Circassians in Turkey is characterized by its modern diasporic identity. The main actors involved in forming this identity are Circassian ethnic associations, a strategy that of course is also based upon the freedom of association. These ethnic associations aim to raise popular consciousness within and outside of the community of the need for the construction and articulation of Circassian identity and are considered to be a very important way to prevent

cultural assimilation. They organize language courses, cultural events, folk dance groups and their performances, and trips to the homeland in the Caucasus.

Attempts at slowing the assimilation process mentioned earlier were initially made in the post-World War II period. *Dost Eli Yardimlasma Dernegi* (freely translated: "Friends Helping Hands Association") was the first association established in 1946, with the collaboration of Azeri Turks, and more cultural organisations followed in the 1950s. This was a time when Circassian identity was being encouraged by the Circassian elite. However, these organisations encountered problems due to Turkish officials who were inimical to manifestations of ethnic pride.<sup>34</sup>

During the 1960s, which were relatively open years, a few associations reappeared. The *Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür Dernegi* (Northern Caucasus Culture Association), which was established in Ankara in 1964, distinguished Circassian identity from the Turkish ethnic legacy, and promoted cultural discourse. This association contributed to the preservation of Circassian heritage by emphasizing its folklore and traditions.

In 1980, the military coup shut down all ethnic organisations, a situation that was reversed in the late 1980s. The *Kaf-Der* (Caucasian<sup>35</sup> Association), an umbrella organisation established in 1993, constitutes the largest Circassian network of associations in Turkey. Its headquarters are in Ankara and it has over 34 branches throughout the country. *Kaf-Der* goes beyond a traditional cultural agenda by committing itself to different projects such as the political representation of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey and its adaptation to urban life, and places a special emphasis on Circassian identity.

There are two other major associations, both established in 1995: *Kafkas Vakfi* (the Caucasian Foundation) and *Birlesik Kafkasya Dernegi* (the United Caucasus Association). There are approximately 80 different branch associations throughout the country. These mother organisations are Islamic-oriented and promote the idea of establishing an Islamic confederation in the northern Caucasus. They have recently engaged in the Chechen independence movement against the Russian authorities. The activities of these associations are closely monitored by the Turkish government, especially since the official policy of Turkey towards the Chechen issue has somewhat shifted away from the Chechen side.<sup>36</sup>

A very important organisation was established in 2000. The Democratic Circassian Platform was founded by intellectuals of the Circassian community to monitor Turkish compliance to EU criteria and to lobby for the cultural rights of Circassian groups. Their main aim is to increase the resistance of their community against assimilation and ethnic and cultural erosion, to defend their language and literature, their dances, their music, their crafts, architecture and cuisine, their entire cultural heritage that makes them who they are, and to produce and support projects that will protect and develop this heritage.

The very existence of the Democratic Circassian Platform demonstrates that the attitudes of Turkish state officials have changed over the last few years, and that the evolving democratisation process in Turkey has made room for the expression of the identities of all ethnic groups.<sup>37</sup>

### **Conclusion**

It has become clear that Turkey still has a long way to go to meet international and European standards regarding the protection of minorities. The Lausanne Policy followed in Turkey is not in line with current standards, and works at the expense of ethnic minorities.

The main conclusion to be drawn from this paper is that as long as Turkey continues to treat groups who have different backgrounds, different roots, different ethnicities, and different languages, as Turks, it is, in fact, denying the very existence of these peoples, which is not compatible with the

fundamental principles and existing treaty and monitoring bodies' provisions for the protection of minority rights, nor with the principles of democracy.

On the other hand, even though Circassians are not considered to be an ethnic minority in a legal sense, it is an interesting and positive development that their efforts in preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage are, especially in the last few years, not being thwarted by the Turkish government. Thus while it cannot be said that Turkey is protecting the Circassians as an ethnic group, it is not restricting them heavily either. I believe that the further Turkey proceeds in the EU admission process, and the more efforts it makes in assuring stability and its place in the international arena, the more this will be to the advantage of the Circassians and other minority groups. So in that sense, the international and European communities play a key part, possibly even contributing a solution to the Circassian post-exile tragedy.

The primary way the Circassians in Turkey are protecting their culture is through the Circassian associations, which keep the younger generations involved with their culture, and also ensure the presence of Circassians in the political field. These ethnic organisations are a powerful weapon in exercising their freedom of association, an important right of minorities. In addition, the existence of political interests groups such as the Democratic Circassian Platform, which is a very important actor in the public arena, reflects that Turkey is moving in the right direction in the democratisation process.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This essay is a slightly modified part of my Master's Thesis, submitted to the Department of International and European Public Law at Tilburg University, The Netherlands, and defended on 6 June 2008.

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<sup>3</sup> Except for non-Muslims, Armenians, Jews and Greeks are the only officially recognized minority groups.

<sup>4</sup> Ç. Öner, *Su bizim Cerkesler* [These Circassians of Ours], Istanbul: Can Yayinlari, 2000, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> See A. Spiliopoulou Akermark, *Justification of Minority Protection in International Law*, Gothenburg: Kluwer Law International, 1997, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed overview, see A. Spiliopoulou Akermark, *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> K. Henrard, *Devising an Adequate System of Minority Protection*, The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000, p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> UN Resolution (General Assembly), 217 C III, New York, 10 December 1948.

<sup>9</sup> In 2006, the Commission was replaced by the Human Rights Council, which assumed responsibility over the Sub-Commission.

<sup>10</sup> However, unfortunately this body has recently ceased to exist. The UN has yet to decide what new body will be created to deal with minority issues.

<sup>11</sup> ECtHR 17 February 2004, case no. 44158/98, *Gorzelik v. Poland*.

<sup>12</sup> Before 1994, the OSCE was called the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).

<sup>13</sup> A. Phillips, *Mechanisms for the Implementation of Minority Rights*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2004, p. 160.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>15</sup> F. Capotorti, *Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, 1979, Geneva: United Nations 1991, p. 96.

<sup>16</sup> For examples, see R. M. Letschert, *The Impact of Minority Rights Mechanisms*, Eindhoven: TMC Asser Press, 2005, pp. 30-32.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed commentary on definitional issues, see A. Spiliopoulou Akermark, *Op. cit.*, p. 86 and further.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> G. Alfredsson, Report on 'Equality and Non-Discrimination: Minority Rights,' 7<sup>th</sup> *International Colloquy on the ECHR, CoE*, Strasbourg, 1990, H/Coll(90)6, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> M. Weller, *The Rights of Minorities in Europe: A Commentary on the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> L. Almairac, 'Turkey: A Minority Policy of Systematic Negation,' *Report for the IHF*, October 2006, p. 11.



- <sup>22</sup> N. Kaya and C. Baldwin, 'Minorities in Turkey, Submission to the European Union and the Government of Turkey,' *Minority Rights Group International*, July 2004, p. 5.
- <sup>23</sup> EU, 'Accession Criteria [Copenhagen Criteria],' *Europa Glossary*, available at <[http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary /accession \\_criteria\\_copenhagen\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary /accession _criteria_copenhagen_en.htm)>.
- <sup>24</sup> L. Almairac, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.
- <sup>25</sup> 'Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan' is a Kurdish separatist movement, which is now on the list of terrorist organisations by numerous states and organisations, and the EU has declared the PKK as such in its Council Decision 2002/334/EC.
- <sup>26</sup> This law was amended in 2006 and is considered a major human rights violation. See D. Fernandes, 'A Step Backwards: The Effects of the New Anti-Terror Law on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms', *Opror*, <[http://www.opror.net/article.php3?id\\_article=45](http://www.opror.net/article.php3?id_article=45)>, published February 4, 2007.
- <sup>27</sup> N. Kaya and C. Baldwin, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.
- <sup>28</sup> Turkish: *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [Justice and Development Party].
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- <sup>30</sup> N. Kaya and C. Baldwin, *Op. cit.*
- <sup>31</sup> ADN Kronos International, 'Turkey: Circassian Minority Asserts its Identity', *Genocide Watch*, <<http://www.genocidewatch.org/TURKEYCircassianMinorityAssertsitsIdentityMay06.htm>>, published May 29, 2006.
- <sup>32</sup> A. Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook*, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001, p. 106.
- <sup>33</sup> N. Kaya and C. Baldwin, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.
- <sup>34</sup> A. Jaimoukha, *Op. cit.*, p. 104.
- <sup>35</sup> The term 'Caucasian' is a quasi-scientific 'racial' category commonly used in Western societies to refer to 'white' people, but in this context it modifies the Caucasus as an adjective.
- <sup>36</sup> A. Kaya, 'Political Participation Strategies of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey,' *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 2004), p. 234 and further.
- <sup>37</sup> B. Toksabay, 'Conflict over Language Rights; The case of Kurds and Circassians in Turkey,' unpublished Master of Arts' Degree Requirement Essay, Sabanci University, 2005, p. 78.

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## Research Notes

## DEMOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS IN ABKHAZIA: A SUMMARY

*Astanda Khashba*<sup>1</sup>

The reproduction of a society's population through successive generations is one of the main processes of its renewal. At this stage of mankind's history, the regulation of a population's reproduction has changed qualitatively and social processes have replaced the biological mechanisms that regulate reproduction. On the individual level, birth and death remain biological phenomena, but balancing birth and death rates is a socially determined process. In contemporary societies there are strong public opinions about creating and about saving human life.

Reproduction of the population depends on a parity of the birth rate and the death rate to each other. These parameters are influenced by natural-biological, socio-economic, socio-cultural and psychological factors. The size and structure of the population also influence its reproduction as well as historical factors. All of these variables must be taken into account in order to understand the demographic conditions in the Republic of Abkhazia today.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Abkhazia was repeatedly exposed to severe ordeals which affected its population; first of all, the Russian-Caucasian war and the mass forced emigration [Russian: *makhadzhirstvo*] of Abkhazi people to the Ottoman Empire. The subsequent socio-political shocks caused by the formation of the Soviet system – including the October Revolution, Civil War, and mass political reprisals – had long-term negative repercussions on the population and its reproductive dynamics. Likewise, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there was widespread political instability, which had a negative effect on populations in post-Soviet territories.

The political and socio-economic shocks at the beginning of the 1990s had a major impact on Abkhazia's demography as well as being the catalysts for other problems. The social and psychological stresses connected with the transition to a market economy followed by the Georgian-Abkhazian War in 1992-1993 led to the deterioration of the population's standard of living and general well being. Contributing factors included increased unemployment, out-migration of part of the labor force, reduction in the number of marriages and births, and increase of the death rate, all of which have resulted in a reduction of the size and composition of the population.

People's movements internally are also influencing Abkhazian society. Appreciable distinctions in birth and death rates have been observed between the urban and rural populations. In addition, the tradition of having many children among the rural population is losing its power.

V. I. Kozlov said: "Traditions of having many children have occurred in the past in all nations of the world. Their occurrence and dying off during the recent historical period is not connected with features of ethnic culture. However, specific conditions of people's life do affect the rates of transition from a large family to a small one." We conducted research in three administrative areas of the Republic of Abkhazia: Gudautsky, Ochamchyrsky, and Tkuarchalsky. Among the topics considered was the demographic make-up of the modern rural Abkhazian family. Comparison of the results and research statistics reveals an increase in smaller families consisting of two to four persons whereas the relative density of larger families is decreasing. Accordingly, families of less than four persons lead to a decrease in population size, while families of five or more persons result in a population increase. The average size of a rural Abkhazian family has undergone an average change from 4.4 persons to 3.8 persons. The village – once the keeper of patriarchal traditions based on strong household units and characterized by large families – is a thing of the past, with the city now playing the central role. The urban way of life is becoming more and more the standard to which people in the countryside aspire. Still, low numbers of children in families cause anxiety, especially in rural areas where people believe it is preferable to have families with

two, three, four or more children. Married couples do not want to stay childless, but more often they prefer to limit their family size to one or two children in response to new social conditions. Thus, almost all families have or wish to have a child, a fact that research data supports. But beyond that, desires to have more children come up against other family needs. And this leads to the question: how many children are best for a family, and what degree of the reproduction of the population is optimal for society?

A greater prevalence of the one or two children family consolidates the contemporary ideal or "fashion" of a small family. An increase in the number of childless married couples is adverse for the overall demographic situation. A growth in this category of families confirms an increase in the outflow of rural youth to cities. The relative density of the larger sized families of seven or eight persons is noticeably reduced. All this leads to the modern rural family becoming smaller and simpler in structure: the nuclear family taking the place of the extended, multi-generational family with many children.

There is a distinctive atypical demographic situation in the Republic of Abkhazia, which does not allow its attribution to any type of reproduction.

On the one hand, the tendency of decline in the birth rate is defined, the death rate, especially of individuals of reproductive age, increases; on the other hand, the infant mortality rate decreases (from between 6.4 and 5.4 in 2002 to 3.5 in 2005-2006). The natural increase is close to zero (0.6). The main causes of death are cardiac disease (3.3% in 2002, 5.2% in 2005, 5.3% in 2006); cancers (0.8% in 2002, 1.3% in 2005, 1.2% in 2006); and accidents (0.2% in 2002, 0.1% in 2005, 0.2% in 2006).

One of the most multi-sided social processes is population shift. Migration is connected, directly or indirectly, to all parts of a society. Migration influences the main processes defining the level of reproduction of a population, its birth rates and death rates. At certain times in its history, these population movements – inflow or outflow – have played greater or lesser roles in the population dynamics of the Republic. In the 1990s, part of the population preferred to leave the Republic by emigration, while another segment of the population chose to migrate from the villages to the cities during the post-war period. This is especially significant because these new urban migrants are overwhelmingly people of young and middle age, that is, those with high reproductive capacities.

The Georgian-Abkhazian war in 1992-1993 also had negative consequences on the course of natural population dynamics in the Republic of Abkhazia. Protracted military actions caused internal and external migrations, led to the deterioration of social and economic systems, and resulted in a lower standard of living among the population.

Taking into account the material discussed above, it can be concluded that the decrease in birth rates and the increase in death rates among the Republic of Abkhazia's population reflects the following:

- (1) The deterioration of the social and economic conditions;
- (2) A decrease in the standard of living;
- (3) A reduction in the overall life expectancy of the population; and
- (4) An increase in the death rate among the labor force.

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## NOTES

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## POLITICAL AND LEGAL FACTORS IN THE ECONOMIC TRANSITION OF ABKHAZIA

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The transition from an administrative-command economy to a market-driven system has revived entrepreneurial activity in the private economic sector of the Republic of Abkhazia. This change is exacerbated by the complicated social and economic conditions that resulted from the destructive war of the early 1990s and the subsequent difficulties of post-war reconstruction.

As is well known, certain conditions are necessary for the realization of entrepreneurial activity in a national economy, among the most important of which are favorable political, legal, economic, institutional, geographical, technical and social circumstances.

In political terms, the Republic of Abkhazia is “a sovereign, democratic, legal state” in which private property is protected according to the Constitution, which was ratified in November 1994. In addition, the legal equality of all forms of business ownership in the Republic is legislatively provided and their protection is guaranteed.

Despite this, international political situation, which developed around Abkhazia during the post-war period, did not favor the encouragement of entrepreneurial activity. The economic sanctions declared by the CIS countries towards Abkhazia under pressure from the Republic of Georgia, had halted the formation of market infrastructures to a certain degree and negatively impacted the development of the entire business sector. However, since the beginning of 2000, the Republic has received more opportunities for dealing with its economic problems, including the formation of an open, pro-enterprise environment, owing to a more constructive relationship with the Russian Federation.

Enterprise is carried out within the limits of a certain legal setting including the presence of laws, the existence of regulatory bodies, and the providing of optimal conditions for business development. The basic act regulating enterprise activity in the Republic is the *Civil Code of the Republic of Abkhazia*, enacted in 2006, which defined the economic, social, organizational and legal bases of opening, developing and operating business enterprises according to their form of ownership, including state-owned, public-association owned, and privately-owned enterprises. The Civil Code regulates the rights and the responsibilities of business, guarantees freedom to engage in business, and declares state support and protection for business.

As a whole, it is possible to ascertain that the formation of a positive business environment in the Republic in recent years has assisted the successful development of this sector of the economy.

In 2007, according to the State Management of Statistics of the Republic of Abkhazia, the total number of legal business enterprises and corporations registered with the Department of Justice and representing all forms of ownership, was 4521 (see Table 1). The percentage of private, non-state owned economic entities was 60.7 % of the total number of enterprises and corporations. It is noteworthy that the total number of private, non-state enterprises that had opened in the Republic of Abkhazia by the beginning of 2008 was 2926. The majority of these enterprises were new ventures based not on the privatization of state holdings, but on the combined efforts and financial capital of private entrepreneurs, which is a positive trend in Abkhazia’s transition to a market economy.

**Table 1** Distribution of Economic Entities in the Republic of Abkhazia by Form of Ownership, 2000-2007

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Growth Ratio
<b>Total Number</b>	1975	2217	2445	2770	3045	3442	3910	4521	115.6
<b>Including:</b>									
<b>State-owned</b>	798	842	879	931	1001	1071	1104	1129	102.3
<b>Privately-owned</b>	962	1117	1282	1527	1707	1999	2373	2926	123.3
<b>Owned by a Public Association</b>	215	258	284	312	337	372	433	466	107.6

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**NOTES**

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## THE PROSPECTS FOR ABKHAZIA AND THE STABILITY OF THE BLACK SEA-CAUCASIAN REGION

*Leila Tania*<sup>1</sup>

The prospects for Abkhazia's recognition by the international community depend not only on external, objective factors – particularly the current geopolitical interests of the major world powers – but also on the successful accomplishment of both short-term and long-term requirements, which are essential to the internal development of the Abkhazian state. These include: (1) national security issues, (2) recognition of Abkhazia as an independent state within Europe, and (3) participation by Abkhazia as a regional actor in the Black Sea–Caucasian region.

### National Security Issues

In a wider context, the question of national security is not only about the country's defenses, that is, its ability to resist any hostile aggression, including that from Georgia, but also about its demographic capacities. It is well known that after the Caucasian War in the nineteenth century, the majority of Abkhazians were deported to the Ottoman Empire, primarily modern-day Turkey as well as some other countries of the Near East. The right of Abkhazians to return to their historical Motherland has not been realized thus far, and that has been the reason for the demographic imbalance in Abkhazia and, correspondingly, the risk to its national security for more than two centuries. That is why solving the problem of repatriating Abkhazians is an important strategic priority for Abkhazia. Although Abkhazia has not been a participant in negotiating international treaties because of its unrecognized status, its state strategy regarding the question of repatriation is based on international norms. Specifically, in 1997 the Abkhazian Parliament passed a resolution about the 19<sup>th</sup> century deportation of Abkhazians (Abaza), according to which the deported Abkhazians were given the status of refugees in accordance with the UN General Assembly *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951. In 1998 the *Constitutional Law Regarding Repatriates* was passed, which became the instrument of the legislative regulation of the return and further integration of the descendents of *makhadjirs* [emigrants from the Caucasus who were deported after the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian-Caucasus War and resettled in the Ottoman Empire]. Institutional structures to meet these goals were established in Abkhazia. However, some countries which had signed the international treaties concerning the rights of refugees to return, including Russia and Turkey, did not in fact discharge their obligations in this respect and even took steps that constituted the breaking of these obligations. Thus, for instance, the refusal of the Turkish government to permit the President of Abkhazia, Sergey Bagapsh, to visit people of the Abkhazian Diaspora in Turkey in 2007 had negative reactions in Abkhazia.

Among the hopes associated with the acceptance of Turkey into the European Union is that it will have to observe European standards related to recognizing the rights of national minorities. Thus, for instance, according to Article 17.1 of the Council of Europe's 1995 *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (FCNM), the obligation of the Treaty countries not to hinder "implementation of the rights of the persons belonging to national minorities, establishment and support of free and peaceful trans-boundary contacts with the persons constantly living on the territory of other states, particularly, with the persons with whom they share common ethnic, cultural, language or religious inheritance" is asserted. The realization of their obligations towards Abkhazian refugees by these countries is related to a new understanding of the modern geopolitical realities in the Black Sea–Caucasian Region. After the break-up of the USSR, Turkey's neighbors became not only Russia and other recognized countries but also an unrecognized state: Abkhazia. Legalizing trade and other economic contacts between Turkey and Abkhazia, which would encourage regional economic cooperation, at least in the Black Sea context, could supplement the successful economic cooperation between Turkey and Russia. Important economic opportunities are also



opening up in light of the new “European Union Neighborhood Policy” in the southern Caucasus where not only Georgia but also Abkhazia could realize their economic potential. In turn, this could lead to the formation of new guidelines for regional security based on the shared principles of rejecting military force, recognizing unique normative standards in the sphere of security (including national demands for demographic security) and achieving geo-economic consensus among all the interested actors of the Black Sea–Caucasian Region.

### **Abkhazia as a Legal Democratic State and Its Integration in a Wider Europe**

In our opinion, “Wider Europe” is a multi-aspected notion. Above all, it is the territory of European democratic values, norms and standards. In this context, Abkhazia has been part of it for a long time, if the direction of its inner state reforms especially, in the sphere of the legislature, are taken into consideration. Possibly, in relation to Abkhazia, the well-known principle will apply: “First the democratic standards, then the international recognition,” although, in fairness, it should be confessed that recently it has become rather rhetorical. Nevertheless, many of the laws that are passed by the Parliament of Abkhazia today undergo inner scrutiny to reveal their correspondence to international norms. Moreover, the Speaker of the Parliament, Nugzar Ashuba, has repeatedly appealed to European organizations to provide an expert advisor to support the reform of Abkhazia’s Legislature, but unfortunately this appeal remains unsuccessful at present.

Many projects of Abkhazian NGOs are aimed at the implementation of European democratic norms in various spheres of social life, for instance, in systems of local self-government or in the legal sphere. The experience of our organization, the “Foundation for Civic Initiatives and People’s Progress,” which works in the human rights arena, shows that there are many problems here that are difficult to solve by those small resources which we possess. Moreover, we would like to emphasize the fact that the prevalent opinion that our society is not ready for democratic reforms is not quite true. For instance, our seminars on standards in the protection of human rights are, as a rule, received with great interest not only by representatives of the civil society but also by official institutions. In comparison with our colleagues in other parts of the southern Caucasus, we work in this sphere relatively quietly, in a spirit of cooperation with both representatives of the court system and other legal organizations, although there are certainly difficulties and significant differences of opinion, which are natural for any society in such a transitional period. The status of freedom of speech in Abkhazia is significantly better than in other countries of the southern Caucasus, although it is nonetheless necessary to think about which of these standards will really work for the sake of the whole society. Therefore, with the aim of the balanced democratic development of the whole region, which requires, at a minimum, a guarantee of peace, international organizations could support the democratic processes in Abkhazia more actively than they currently are, especially in comparison with other southern Caucasian countries.

### **Abkhazia’s Role in the Black Sea–Caucasian Region**

Despite the difficult post-war period, when Abkhazia was exposed to economic blockade and actual isolation instead of the rehabilitation of its infrastructure and rebuilding of its society, Abkhazia has managed to survive and become an independent state despite its unrecognized status. However, the stability and the democratic vector of the internal state development of Abkhazia are connected, in many respects, with an effective foreign policy. It is impossible not to perceive as a positive criterion that the foreign policy of Abkhazia, oriented in a strategic partnership with Russia, its nearest geographical neighbor for many years, takes into account the fact that after the Black Sea countries join the European Union, Abkhazia would become the nearest geographic neighbor of the EU in the southern Caucasus as well. The Abkhazian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Shamba, has repeatedly emphasized the many-sidedness of the foreign policy of Abkhazia (especially its readiness for participation in the European Neighborhood Policy), which, certainly, strengthens its international

authority as a state orientated to the observance of international norms and standards, and therefore, as a reliable and worthy partner in international relations.

The potentially stabilizing role of Abkhazia as an independent state, functioning as a kind of “strategic buffer” between the competing global, geopolitical interests of Russia and the USA in the southern Caucasus, has been gradually recognized by many experts and politicians both in the West and in Russia, although in Abkhazia itself this is not a new concept. Many of the approaches towards Abkhazia that appear utopian could have a pragmatic realization in the context of a Wider Europe.

The main question is the prospect of Georgia joining NATO. Abkhazian attitudes to this organization are seen exclusively through the prism of those hopes which Georgia itself places on NATO with the aim of restoring its territorial integrity at the expense of Abkhazian sovereignty. It is not yet certain what response will develop in Abkhazia: a scenario of forceful resistance, like in Kosovo in its time or, a scenario based on the development of a partnership with Russia and NATO, the necessity of which has been discussed often by the official representatives and experts from both sides. The latter possibility would lead, in turn, to the international legal legitimating of the current spheres of influence between Russia and the USA and, therefore, with a certain probability, to the international recognition of the Republic of Abkhazia. It is possible that some mechanisms of the European Neighborhood Policy could be used for ensuring that there would be no renewal of hostilities. In case Georgia does join NATO, Abkhazia will face well-grounded fears, risks and a list of threats for not only its existence as a state, but also its national identity now and in the future. In Europe, guaranteeing the preservation of national identity is perceived as an important attribute of a real democracy. Therefore, from our point of view, it is necessary for Abkhazia to be officially represented not only at the UN Security Council, which Russia has been (unsuccessfully) lobbying, but also, to a greater degree, at the meetings of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) addressing Georgia, since it concerns not only the political interests of these three actors, but, above all, the national security of Abkhazia. Any discussions and agreements that might be approved concerning Georgia within the framework of the NRC should take Abkhazia’s position into account. In particular, Turkey as a NATO state must respect the rights of the descendents of deported Abkhazians and other Caucasian peoples living within its territory; not only understanding the reasons why these peoples sometimes clash, but also forming a strategy aimed at ensuring the international rights of all of these groups in order to promote the general stability of the Black Sea Region. This approach could be also supplemented by the geopolitical expediency of recognizing Abkhazia as an independent state performing the role of a stabilizing geopolitical buffer in the Black Sea–Caucasian Region, which would be strategically important for Russia, Turkey and the European Union.

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## NOTES

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## EMIGRATION TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: AN OVERVIEW

*Berat Yıldız*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction: Emigration Phases

The emigrations of Muslim peoples to the Ottoman Empire in response to Russian imperial expansionism may be chronically divided into three main periods. The first period includes the time span from the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 to the start of the Crimean War in 1853. With the signing of the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, the Crimean Tatar and the Nogay groups began to emigrate to Ottoman Anatolia and Rumelia, a process that continued during the subsequent decades.

The second mass exodus of Muslims escaping from Russian rule occurred after the Crimean War and resulted in a dramatic population loss for Adyges, Crimean Tatars and Nogays. An especially strong influx of immigrants occurred during the 15 years after the Crimean War. This situation created a number of problems for the Ottoman authorities that had to deal with resettling the newly arrived masses of people.

The third massive wave of emigration occurred after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877–1878. Following the Ottoman defeat on the Caucasian front, the Abkhazians, Dagestanis and Muslim Ajaris started to leave their native lands in addition to the Adyges, Crimean Tatars and Nogays.

As a result of the aforementioned processes, it is estimated that millions of people settled in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the phenomenon of the immigration, starting at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and lasting until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, occupies an important place in the history of Adyges and Abkhazians.

This overview focuses on the second two emigration phases.

### Emigration after the Crimean War

The Crimean War was a turning point for the peoples of the Black Sea region. Even though the Allies, including the Ottoman Empire, managed to defeat Tsarist Russia, the victory negatively impacted the Crimean and Caucasian Muslims in subsequent years. As a result of the Crimean War, Russia learned not to challenge the interests of the Western powers directly, and turned her attention instead to the Caucasus and Central Asia, assigning its best military units and commanders to these regions in preparation for a total invasion of these areas (Ésadze 1993, 75)<sup>3</sup>.

The “Sublime Porte” of the Ottoman court could not exert significant influence over the Caucasus after the Crimean War. Russia’s well-organized and heavily armed military units finally overwhelmed and captured Shamil in Gunib in 1859, effectively ending the main resistance movement in the eastern part of the Caucasus. After the fall of the eastern Caucasus, Russia focused on the western region of the Caucasus and, after about five years of fighting, managed to subjugate the dispersed Circassians. On May 21, 1864, after the last attempt at resistance, the Ubykhs surrendered the Kbaada region and the entire Caucasus was under Russian rule.

After the Russian invasion of the western Caucasus, the Circassians were given two options: either to come down from the mountains and settle in the valleys where the Cossacks constituted the majority of the population, or to leave the region *en masse* (Ésadze, 1993, 77). The second option meant emigration to the Ottoman Empire. An important factor in the Circassians’ decision to emigrate was the hope that the Ottoman Sultan, who was also a Caliph of Islam, would assist them as fellow Muslims. As a result, more than one million emigrants – the majority of them from the Caucasus – left for the Ottoman Empire (Karpat 1985, 111). The Russian authorities, whose main objective was to get rid of the local Muslim population, did not interfere with their departure.

However, the Ottoman government was not prepared to receive such a great number of immigrants. Millions of people were dispatched by sea in unhealthy conditions, which caused the spread of disease among them. Many lives were lost not only because of poorly organized processes of

transportation, but also as a result of numerous hardships related to the settlement of the Ottoman lands. Bad organization, diseases, accidents at sea and food shortages marked the emigration of the Circassians. It is estimated that at least 25% of immigrants died before their settlement on Ottoman soil (McCarthy 1996, 45).

### **Emigration after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877–1878**

In the years between the Crimean War and the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877–1878, the number of immigrants reached its highest point (in the 1860s), and then gradually decreased, although immigration did continue. As a consequence, the Russians emerged victorious from the War of 1877–1878 and the Ottoman Empire lost its former territories in Rumelia (in the southern Balkans), and in the Trans-Caucasus.

A considerable proportion of the Caucasians who immigrated to the Ottoman Empire as a result of the Crimean War had been settled in Rumelia. But when the Ottoman Empire lost vast territories in the Balkans in accordance with the Berlin Treaty of 1878, many of the immigrants who had settled there earlier had to emigrate for a second time. However, by now the Ottomans had much more experience settling immigrants (İpek 1999, 156) and a specially established Immigration Commission and settlement units ensured better organization of the process. For this reason, the immigrants arriving from the Caucasus and Rumelia were efficiently dispatched to other parts of the Empire according to a systematic plan (Cuthell 2005, 93).

As a result of the fighting on the eastern front in 1877–1878, the Abkhazians, Ajarians and Dagestanis were forced to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire along with the Crimean Tatars and Circassians. Moreover, compared to the period after the Crimean War, the ethnic origins of the immigrants became much more diverse in the years following the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877–1878.

### **Emigrating Ethnic Groups**

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire was receiving immigrants of many different ethnic backgrounds, although most of them were from the Crimean Peninsula and the Caucasus.

#### ***Adyges-Circassians***

The Adyges-Circassians probably constituted the largest immigrant group to the Ottoman Empire and because they had established close relations with the Ottomans in the struggle against Russia, many were forced to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire after the Russian invasion.

The Adyges lost thousands of their people during the emigration and the settlement processes, primarily due to diseases and the harsh living conditions (Kasumov 1992, 269–275). However, their failure to adopt and conform to the laws of the lands where they settled made the settlement of later immigrants quite problematic for the Ottomans. The Ottomans, who used the name “Circassian” for these and related people from the Caucasus, assigned the task of supervising the settlement process to bureaucrats who were themselves of emigrant descent with the dual aim of easing the settlement process and of furthering the incorporation of the immigrants into the framework of Ottoman society (Cuthell, 2005, 112–126). The chairman of the Immigrant Commission, Hafız Pasha, was a Circassian and other members of the commission were also of different minority origins (Cuthell, 2005, 108).

Even before these mass immigrations, there were many high-ranking Ottoman generals of Circassian descent (Hotko 2001, 231). The Ottoman government had been assigning Circassian generals to various immigrant groups requesting them to form military units. Especially during the interwar period, the Circassians, who had settled in Rumelia, were in conflict with the local people and in some places were acting independently from the Ottoman government (Popovic 1978, 162). As a result, they were implicated in the 1875 massacre of Bulgarians known as the “Bulgarian Horrors.” In accordance with the Berlin Treaty of 1878, the Circassians were not allowed to settle in the Balkans

again. Following their second emigration, the Circassians were resettled in various other locations throughout the Ottoman Empire.

The Circassians, who emigrated in great numbers before and after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878, played an important role in the Ottoman military during the final period of the Empire, as well as participating in the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Being loyal subjects, as well as suitable and reliable for military purposes, the Circassians were settled in overwhelmingly non-Muslim regions in order to increase and balance the Muslim population there (Cuthell 2005,102-121). In the next decades, although their language and culture were quite different from those of the Anatolian people, it is possible to say that the Circassians managed to become integrated successfully within Ottoman society.

### ***Abkhazians***

The Abkhazians, who lived on the Black Sea coast, were one of the autochthon peoples of the Caucasus closely related to the Adyges and the Ubkhys. The colonization of the Abkhazian homeland, which was considered part of Georgian territory by the Russians began with their annexation of Georgia in 1801.

After the annexation of Abkhazian lands, many inhabitants rose up against Tsarist rule. Consequently, in the 1860s the bulk of the population was forced to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire (Dzidzariya 1982, 157). This migration had two important consequences: firstly, the majority of the population who left Abkhazia were Muslim, while most of those who stayed in Abkhazia became Christian. The other main consequence was that those Abkhazians who remained became a minority group in their homeland where large, depopulated territories lay open to resettlement by Russians (Chirikba 2002).

The second greatest wave of Abkhazian emigration reached its peak after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 (Dzidzariya 1982, 174). When the war broke out, many Abkhazians sided with the Ottomans. They rebelled against Russia with the intention of displacing the Armenians and the Cossacks who had settled in Abkhazia after the Crimean War. Furthermore, Maan Kamlet, an Abkhazian noble who had immigrated to Anatolia, organized the Caucasian militia forces in Anatolia and played a major role in the attack known as the Sohum Offensive (Berzeg 1993, 43-55).

This militia contacted their kinsmen in the region to provide weapons and ammunition to the rebels and forced the Russians, under the command of General Kravchenko, to retreat from the region. However, the Caucasian forces, which were successful at the beginning of the war, did not get necessary reinforcements and were scattered by the regrouped Russian army. After the war, the Russians expelled the Abkhazians from their lands and the majority of the Abkhazians emigrated, like their kin before them, to Anatolia (Coppieters 1998, 4-15).

The Ottomans settled the Abkhazians mainly in the eastern Marmara region, although some Abkhazians were settled with Adyge-Circassian groups in various parts of Anatolia. In general, the Ottomans treated the Abkhazians the same way as they treated the likewise Caucasus-originating Adyges-Circassians.<sup>4</sup>

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### **NOTES**

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<sup>2</sup> The estimated number of immigrants varies among different sources from two million up to eight million people.

<sup>3</sup> This abstract does not include citations. – Ed. Note.

<sup>4</sup> V. A. Chirikba (2000) mentions a large number of Abkhazians are now living in cities and towns, the most numerous communities being in Istanbul, Ankara, Düzce, İnegöl, Bilecik, Eskişehir, Samsun and Sinop. As well as in Turkey, there are also some 5,000 Abkhazians in Syria.

## THE CIRCASSIAN DIASPORA IN WESTERN EUROPE: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

*Cansu Deneş Oktay*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an estimated one and a half million Circassians were forced to leave the Caucasus and emigrate to Ottoman Empire territories, leaving only scattered remnant communities behind. The Russian census of 1897 recorded 150,000 Circassians remaining in their homeland, less than one tenth of the original population. These people, coerced into sharing their towns and lands with their conquerors, and struggling to rebuild their lives, had little sense of national identity until after the Russian Revolution. As part of Soviet policy towards its diverse “nationalities” (ethnic minorities), they were arbitrarily divided into separate, administrative units including the Adyge Autonomous Province, the Karachay-Cherkessia Autonomous Province, and the Kabardino-Balkaria Autonomous Republic. Isolated along with the rest of the Soviet Union, the Circassians in the Caucasus had little contact with the Circassians who left the homeland until the 1980s, accelerated by the 1987 *perestroika* reforms and subsequent fall of the Soviet Union.

Today an estimated 4 million Circassians live outside of their homeland in more than 40 countries throughout the world. The largest numbers of Circassians live in Turkey (over 2 million) and there are also significant settlements in Syria, Jordan, Israel and Yugoslavia,<sup>2</sup> with small, well-established communities in North America (especially in the US states of New Jersey, New York, and California). Approximately 6% of the Circassians living outside of the Caucasus reside in Western Europe.

### The Creation of Circassian Diasporas in Western Europe

In Western Europe today there are many Circassian communities, especially in Germany, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium. Some of these communities originated with families who moved to Europe after living in Turkey for several generations. They went to Europe for the economic opportunities there that resulted from the severe decreases in European labor forces following World War II. For instance, Germany signed contracts with a number of Mediterranean countries in order to supplement their reduced workforce and rebuild their post-war economy. Yet unlike ethnic Turks and other “guest workers,” the Circassians were participating in a secondary migration, and while this was a different century and was voluntary in nature, their responses to again leaving one country and adapting to another were likely to have been influenced by their earlier, unique history.

In addition, from the time of their arrival in Western Europe, Circassians formed cultural associations performing social and other functions in their new host countries. Some of the more prominent of these include the Zwingenberg Circassian Association in Germany, the Antwerpen Circassian Association in Belgium, the Almelo Circassian Association in the Netherlands and the Lyon Circassian Association in France.<sup>3</sup> These associations have contributed greatly to the social cohesiveness of Circassians as a distinctive minority and have also influenced the degree and success of their integration – although not necessarily assimilation – into their host societies.

In order to understand the creation of Circassian Diasporas in Western European countries over the last sixty years, it is important to examine these two factors, migration and cultural associations. Regarding migration, questions of when, to where, and how many people were involved can be gathered from government documents and other publications while specific responses to the experience of starting over in a new place will be drawn from interviews. Insight into the changing role of cultural associations can also be developed from in-person interviews as well as through surveys.

### **Circassian Identity and Its Development**

Circassians are proud of being Circassian and identify strongly with cultural traits of honor, independence, bravery, kindness and hospitality. The family, in particular, is a highly respected social institution and the importance of family is expressed in ideals such as deference to older people, strict prohibition of in-marriage among relatives, respect for women, monogamy, fidelity and the avoidance of divorce. Shared religious beliefs, a complex social structure, and a common history dating back hundreds of years contribute to this strong sense of identity. Cultural values are epitomized in the principles of *Khabze*, the Circassian moral and behavioral code, which guides their daily life. In other words, Circassian ethnic identity starts with a strong cultural identity, one that is stronger than a shared language (which is not universal in Circassian Diaspora communities, including those in Europe) or a shared national identity (although this has increased since renewed contact with the Caucasus).

Within the setting of Western European countries, it is therefore important to examine how Circassian identity is developed, changed and/or transmitted. Some features, such as religion, may have taken on new meanings in this context and it would be interesting to determine if Circassians are practicing Islam more, or less, openly in the face of recent European policies and if this has impacted their identity. Overall, my research will explore the ways that Circassian culture is kept alive in Western European countries.

### **How Circassians Define Their National Status**

At the same time that Circassians in Western European countries are figuring out how (and how much) to be French or German or Belgium, etc. while also remaining Circassian, they are also faced with other, newer alternatives to national allegiance. One way is through the activities of pan-European organizations, such as the Federation of European Circassians, who sponsor an annual "Circassian Day" in Europe in partnership with the European Parliament. Another way is by being involved – socially, financially, and/or politically – with the Caucasus.

Due to the technological progress in communications, such as email, Internet sites and cell phones, as well as the ease and low costs of transportation, Circassians in Europe have become transnationals, able to simultaneously participate in Circassian life in a number of locations on a global scale. It is important to examine this phenomenon in order to understand the impact it may have on their individual and community identity. My preliminary research has shown that Circassians living in Western Europe do not share one opinion about their current situation but instead display a range of perspectives. In addition, many of them have multi-cultural identities as Circassians and as integrated members of their new countries, yet these affiliations are not always easy for them. One area for research is to see how different generations of the same families respond to these issues and if these multi-cultural identities become lessened or increase over time. A related aspect will be the role of new sources of information in identity building.

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### **NOTES**

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<sup>2</sup> While also part of Europe, the situation of Yugoslavian Circassians – some of whom left Kosovo during the war in the 1990s and re-emigrated to the Caucasus – involves different historical dynamics and is outside the scope of this research project.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.euroxase.com/tr/index.php?action=fullnews&id=1>.

# THE NORTH CAUCASUS HISTORIES, DIASPORAS AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

THE PAPERS AND ABSTRACTS IN THIS VOLUME WERE ORIGINALLY PRESENTED AT A TWO-DAY CONFERENCE, ENTITLED TOWARDS A NEW GENERATION OF SCHOLARSHIP ON THE CAUCASUS, AND HELD IN SUKHUM, ABKHAZIA ON OCTOBER 30-31, 2007. THE CONFERENCE WAS CO-ORGANIZED BY THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL (NEW YORK), CIRCASSIANACADEMIA (A SCHOLARLY LISTSERV) AND THE CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES (SUKHUM).

THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE WAS TO EXPLORE THE THEMES AND ISSUES THAT ARE EMERGING IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP, ESPECIALLY BY YOUNGER SCHOLARS, AND THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY SPEAK TO CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE VARIOUS SMALL REPUBLICS AND STATES OF THE REGION. THE PRESENTERS AND PARTICIPANTS COMPRISED AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF SCHOLARS FROM ABKHAZIA, BRITAIN, ISRAEL, JAPAN, RUSSIA AND TURKEY AT VARIOUS POINTS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL CAREERS. A RANGE OF ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES - AND REGIONAL TRADITIONS WITHIN THESE GENERAL DISCIPLINES - WAS REPRESENTED: SOCIOLOGY, DEMOGRAPHY, LINGUISTICS, ANTHROPOLOGY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND HISTORY AS WELL AS SPECIALISTS WORKING WITH NGOS AND WITH GOVERNMENT RESEARCH AGENCIES. OVERALL,

THE VOLUME IS UNITED BY A COMMON INTEREST IN THE CAUCASUS, PRIMARILY THE PEOPLES OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS, ESPECIALLY ABKHAZIANS AND CIRCASSIANS.



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