

**АДЫГЭ/ИНДЖЫЛЫЗ ЖУРНАЛ**

**АДЫГЭ  
ПХЪЭЛЪАНТХЪУЭ**

**АДЫГЭ ЩЭНХАБЗЭМРЭ ЛИТЕРАТУРЭМРЭ  
Я ЖУРНАЛ**

япэрей том, етуанэрей выпуск  
гъэмахуэпэ/бадзэуэгъуэ/шыщхьэлу/луэгъуэ  
2009

Редактор нэхьыщхьэр:  
Жэмышхьуэ (Мыхьмуд и къуэ) Амджэд (Амышц)

**ДУНЕЙПСО АДЫГЭ КЪЭХУТЭНЫГЪЭ ЦЕНТР**  
2009

**Circassian/English Journal**

# **The Hearth Tree**

**Circassian Cultural and Literary Miscellany**

Volume 1, Issue 2  
June/July/August/September  
2009

Edited by  
Amjad M. Jaimoukha

**International Centre for Circassian Studies**  
2009

**АДЫГЭ ЦЭНХАБЗЭРЭ (КУЛЬТУРЭРЭ) АДЫГЭ ФОЛЬКЛОРРЭ**  
**Circassian Culture & Folklore**

Гъэмахуэпэ 2009  
June 2009

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Published by the International Centre for Circassian Studies

This triannual publication is in both Circassian and English. It is available in both print and electronic formats.

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### **Редколлегие**

ХэщIапIэм и унафэщIыр, редактор нэхыщхьэр, зэзыдзэкI (тэрмэш):

Жэмыхьуэ Мыхьмуд и кьуэ Амджэд (Амышц)

Маркетинг директор: БищIо Надие

ТхакIуэ-редактор, зэзыдзэкI, веб-мастер: Жэмыхьуэ Сэнджэлей

Гьуазджэ Iуэхум зытетыр: Жэмыхьуэ Думэсарэ

### **Мы кьыдэкIыгьуэм хэт тхакIуэхэр, всакIуэхэр, джэгьуакIуэхэр**

Бэлагьы Любэ (Балагова)

Бэрэгьун Владимир

Жэмыхьуэ Амджэд

Жылокьуэ Кэмал

Кьандур Мухьэдин

КьардэнгьушI Зырамыку

Мэремыкьуэ Хьусен

Нало Заур

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### **Staff**

Chief Executive Officer, Editor-in-Chief, translator: Dr. Amjad M. Jaimoukha

Marketing Officer: Nadia Bisha

Writer-editor, translator, webmaster: Sanjalay Jaimoukha

Artistic Director: Dumasara Jaimoukha

### **Featured writers and poets (in alphabetical order)**

Luba Belaghi

Vladimir Bereghwn

Amjad M. Jaimoukha

Kamal Jalouqa

X'wsein Mereimiqwe

Zawir Nalo

Ziramikw Qardenghwsch'

Mohydeen I. Quandour

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For comments, suggestions, literary and other contributions, and subscriptions, please contact us at: [circassiancentre@gmail.com](mailto:circassiancentre@gmail.com)

## РЕДКОЛЛЕГИЕМ КЪЫБГЪЭДЭКЪУ

### From the Editorial Board

Тхылъеджэ лъапIэхэ,

Куэдрэ къэхъуауэ зэхэпхынкъым диаспорэм щыпсэу адыгэр дызэгухъэу, ди лъэпкъым и сэбэп зыпылъ Iуэху къетхъэжъамэ, абы ехъулIэныгъэ кIэух, дрипагэфын хуэдэу, еттыфауэ. Дэ, адыгэхэр, дызэсар, ди хабзэри зэрыщытыр, ди лъэкIыныгъэхэр наIуэ дydэ къэдмыщIу, дыукIытэхыу итIанэ зэтеубыдауэ зытIыгъыу, нэгъуэщIхэри. Абы кыхэкIыуи, Iуэху щхъэпэр етхъэжъа къудеймэ, – ар ехъулIэныгъэ лъэщу къыдолъытэ!

Иджыри къыздэсым Адыгэ БзэщIэныгъэ IуэхущIапIэ Курыкупсэм и зэгъэпэщыным теухуауэ — псалъэ дахэу къекIуэкIар къэдгъэувыIэу, лэжыгъэр зэредгъэжъэфар ехъулIэныгъэ дydэу къызолъытэ, ди Курыкупсэм и тхылъымпIэхэр иджыри къыдэмыкIами...

Ди пэщIэдзэр – ди лэжыгъэхэмкIэ къэгъэлыгъуа хъуащи, ар нэхъыщхъэу къэтлгытэнщ.

Нэгъабэ, Жэпуэгъуэ мазэм, Амманым щызэхэта Дунейпсо БзэщIэныгъэ Конференцым къызэригъэлыгъуауэ, е 21 лIэщIыгъуэм дызэрыпежъар ди анэбзэ, ди адыгэбзэм зэрылIыкIын уз пкърытущ... Абы дызэрыхуэкIуам и Iуэхур къэтIэтынкъым, зэрызэхэтхыжыным яужь икIэщIыпIэкIэ дихъащ. Аращ ди Курыкупсэм и плъапIэ нэхъ лъагэ дydэри и Iуэхури зэхъэлIауэ лажъэр.

Дызыгъэгущхуэр дэрэжэгъуэ лъэщ зыдэтлгъагъу ди щIалэгъуалэращ: тегушхуауэ йоугъу, хуопабгъэ бзэр зэрагъэпэщыжыным; дунейпсом адыгэ тхакIуэу дэнэ къэрал щыпсэури иритхэфыну зы литературэбзэ зэгъэуIуным.



Адыгэбзэр бзэ нэхъыжью япэ дьдэ цыху зэрыпсэлыа бзэхэм ящыщ  
зыщ. Ар гуэныхыщ икIи напэтехщ музейм кыинэжа бзэхэм щыщ  
зыуэ бгъэтIылыжыныр, бутIыпщыжыныр.

Маржэхэ, кыддэфIыгъ, фыкыддэлажэ, ди щхэм щхэкIэ, ди  
лэпкыым щхэкIэ, дунейпсо бзэ зэтемыхуэу зэхэтым и мыхэнэ  
нэхыщхэм щхэкIэ!

Къандур Мухьэдин

Дунейпсо Адыгэ Къэхутэныгъэ Центрым и хасэм и тхэмадэ

Dear Readers,

It is not very often that people, especially the Circassians of the Diaspora, can say that they have collectively accomplished something worthwhile of which they can all be proud. It really depends on one's measurements of accomplishment or success, but for us Circassians – too much accustomed to a self-effacing culture and of humility and detachment – it amounts to a declaration of success that we have actually embarked on such an ambitious project as the Centre for Circassian Studies, despite all the conflicting desires and directionless attestations of noble objectives. With so many well-intentioned goals and dreams, we came out with a simple aim to put the corner-stone of an organisation, even before that organisation has seen an official birth certificate. (As I write these words, our venerable elders are still discussing the protocols of a simple application to the authorities!)

Therefore, even a beginning is considered a success, because it is with small beginnings that all great things are accomplished. The option to delay or to stop this process is no longer on the cards. We are moving forward; if need be, by producing our own birth certificate.

The International Conference held last October underlined the disastrous situation our language finds itself in in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. How we arrived at this status is not the issue. How we now proceed to reverse the trend is the real issue and the goal of the Centre and therefore the main goal of our collective endeavour. Our young generation in the Diaspora knows this reality and has expressed its desire to resurrect our heritage: our literary Circassian language. We must all work towards that end.

I feel optimistic, not for all the pleasant words expressed repeatedly about our efforts to make this project happen, but for the enthusiasm I have seen, heard and felt every time I spoke to our younger generation about our literary heritage. Circassian is one of the oldest languages known to man, and we cannot allow it to become a museum article, to be remembered solely as an ancient trophy. We are alive and we have a treasure fund of literature and culture to preserve, develop, and promulgate.

I welcome all those who come forward to give us a hand, and I salute those who share our dreams for the future.

Mohydeen Quandour PhD

Author

This is the second issue of the journal *The Hearth Tree*, the first online periodical that is designed to systematically publish in Circassian and English. The multilingual journal is one of the publications of the International Centre for Circassian Studies (ICCS), a new not-for-profit non-governmental organisation principally concerned with the development, promotion and dissemination of Circassian culture. The Centre shall be involved in the publication of materials on Circassian literature, culture and folklore in Circassian and other appropriate languages.

The Circassian language is undergoing transformations that threaten its very existence, even in the heartland of Circassia. In the Circassian homeland, Circassian is gradually losing the competition against Russian as the first language of the Circassian people. The danger is for Circassian to be eventually used solely in the 'ethnic sphere'. In the diaspora, the situation is even more dire. In the absence of systematic and sustained efforts to reverse the loss of language and culture by cultural institutions in the diaspora, Circassian shall continue its downward slide towards extinction. This issue of the journal includes a section dedicated to the theme of the maintenance of the Circassian language.

Circassian materials are presented in the literary languages used in Circassia, namely Adigean and Kabardian (strictly speaking Kabardian-Cherkess), and other extant dialects. Cyrillic orthography is used throughout for Circassian texts. Latin transcription for Circassian is used at times in addition to Cyrillic.

Like the icon of Sozeresh, the emblem of this journal, each issue of *The Hearth Tree* shall have seven branches. Beyond the immediate interest to Circassians in both Circassia and the diaspora, this publication should also be of relevance to anthropologists, ethnologists, culturalists, and folklorists interested in the Caucasus region and those specialised in comparative studies. Musicologists would also find musical materials in the regular section dedicated to ancient and traditional Circassian music. Linguists may also find the unique dual presentation in Circassian and English useful for comparative purposes, and learners of Circassian

should find it a boon. Finally, the ‘lay’ reader would also probably find a tale or two to titillate his palate and stir his/her curiosity.

This publication is a complement of the ICCS Internet portal <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/>>. Although it is principally designed to be autonomous and self-contained, it is recommended that this journal be used ‘on line’ for optimum benefit. The songs and chants featured in this issue of the journal (for which audio files are available) can be heard at <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-journal.php>>. Your comments, suggestions, and literary contributions are most welcome.

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## **АДЫГЭБЗЭ**

### **The Circassian Language**

#### **КЪЭБЭРДЕЙ ГЛАГОЛЬНЭ АФФИКСХЭР: ПРЕФИКСХЭР, ИНФИКСХЭР, СУФФИКСХЭР**

#### **Kabardian Verbal Affixes: Prefixes, Infixes, and Suffixes**

Amjad Jaimoukha

The Circassian language is characterised by a rich and varied ‘tool-set’ of verbal prefixes and suffixes (and, more generally, affixes). There are more than 60 verbal prefixes used in the official and literary Kabardian-Cherkess language. Although this large number of prefixes confers extra dimensions in the expressive domain and provides the writer with a wide range of construction and refining tools, it is also an indication of the complexity and subtlety of the literary language.

Clusters of ‘verbal prefixes’ (two, three – or even more – such prefixes can be attached to the verb, and with other kinds of prefixes, the situation could become intractable – except for a small number of language ‘masters’ – with a limitless array of combinations and permutations, keeping in mind that complex set rules apply to these monstrous formations) could also be formed to convey even more complex and multi-layered designations. The picture becomes even more interesting in the presence of the more than 30 verbal suffixes, and a few verbal infixes.

Examples shall be given of verbal formations with prefixes, affixes and suffixes.

## Verbal Prefixes

**бгъэ~ (бгъэдэ~; бгъэды~)** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates stay/sojourn near smb., smth.; *ex.: сымаджэм бгъэдэсын: to sit by the side of the patient;* **2.** designates action directed towards smb., smth.; *ex.: унэм бгъэдыхъэн: to go up to the house; бгъэдэгъэльэдэн: to roll, drive (smth. to smth.);* **3.** designates departure, or movement away, from smb., smth.; *ex.: бгъэдэжын: to run away (from smb., smth.); бгъэдэкIын: to move away (from smb., smth.); къулыкъум бгъэдэкIын: to leave service/work.*

**бгъуры~** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates movement by/past smb./smth. by lateral surface of smth.; *ex.: бгъурыкIын: to go by/past, to pass by the side;* **2.** designates movement directed towards (lateral) side of an object; *ex.: машинэм бгъурыхъэн: to approach the car from the side;* **3.** designates stay/sojourn near/by, in the vicinity of, smth.; *ex.: бгъурылхъэн: to lay/put (smth.) near/by (smb., smth.).*

**блэ~** (*verbal prefix*) designates movement by/past smb., smth.; *ex.: унэм блэжын: to run by/past the house.*

**гү(э)~** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates process of joining, or merging with, object; *ex.: сэ абы сыгухъац: I have joined him;* **2.** designates movement of subject at the side; *ex.: шыцIэр шым гүэльэдац: the foal ran up to the horse from the side;* **3.** designates being next to, beside smb., *ex.: гъунэгъум гүэсын: to sit next to the neighbour;* **4.** designates separation of an object from another, movement away from smb., smth.; *ex.: гүэльэтын: to fly off/away, to break away, from the side; гүэжын: to flow/run aside, to branch off.*

**гъэ~ (гъа~)** (*verbal prefix*) designates causation; rendered by the verbs: to force, compel, make; to order, tell; to allow, permit; to give the opportunity to do smth.; also forms transitive verbs; *ex.: гъэпсэльэн: to*

*make (smb.) talk; гэмээжэлэн: to make (smb.) go hungry; гээшхэн: to feed (smb.); гьэбзэхын: to hide/conceal (smb., smth.) quickly.*

**дэ~ (ды~) I (verbal prefix)** 1. designates being of an object on a definite territory; *ex.: машинэр уэрамым дэтиц: the car is on the street;* 2. designates being of an object inside another object; *ex.: ницлантIэм дэтын: to be in the yard; тхылъыр икафым дэлъц: the book is in the bookcase;* 3. designates direction inside some premises, deep into a place etc.; *ex.: пхьэр ницлантIэм дэшэн: to drop off the firewood in the yard;* 4. designates direction from within, through smth.; *ex.: цхьэгъубжэм дэпльын: to look out of the window.*

**дэ~ II (verbal prefix)** designates action performed jointly with smb., or stay/sojourn with smb.; *дэшхэн: to eat with smb.; дэцIыгъун: to be with smb.; to accompany smb.*

**е~ (verbal prefix)** refers to object of sentence, designates some open place or object; *ex.: бадзэр фом еницIац: the flies swarmed all over the honey; ар тхылъым еджац: he read the book.*

**жьэ~ (жьэхэ~) (verbal prefix)** designates action directed at smth.; *ex.: жьэхэпльэн: to look steadily (at), to stare (at); жьэхэуэн: (vi) to push, shove (smb., smth.); to hit, strike (against smb., smth.); to collide (with).*

**жьэдэ~ (verbal prefix)** designates action performed in or towards the mouth; *ex.: жьэдэдзэн: (vt) to throw (smth.) in the mouth (usually smb. else's); жьэдэпльэн: (vi) to look into (smb.'s) mouth.*

**зэ~ (verbal prefix)** 1. used in formation of reciprocal verbs; *ex.: зээуэн: to fight each other;* 2. used in formation of reflexive verbs; *ex.: зэгъэжсэн: (vt) to force oneself to wait; зэльэфэлэн: (vt) to drag to oneself.*

**зэдэ~ (verbal prefix)** used in formation of reciprocal verbs; *ex.: зэдэгъушыIэн: to joke with one another.*

**зэт~ (verbal prefix)** designates totality of action; *ex.: зэтеутхыхьын: to splash all over.*



**зэхэ~** (*verbal prefix*) designates totality of action; ex.: **зэхэутхыхьын:** *to splash all over*; **зэхэтхыхьын:** *to cover (ex.: piece of paper) with writing.*

**здэ~** (*verbal prefix*) designates destination of action; ex.: **сыздэклүэнур соуцлэ:** *I know where I am going to.*

**зы~** (*verbal prefix*) designates reflexive action; ex.: **зыльэцлын:** *to wipe oneself*; **зылгыыхьын:** *to look about oneself.*

**и~** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates movement directed downwards and inside object; ex.: **игуэн:** *to push, shove (smb., smth., into smth.); 2. designates being/staying inside/in smth; ex.: **вагоным исын:** *to sit in the coach*; **3.** designates removal of an object from some place; ex.: **игэхун:** *to drop, let fall (from pocket, etc.); нэгуным нсыр ижауц: *the water ran out of the bucket*; **игээцлуклын:** *to bend (smth.) backwards.***

**ире~ (ира~)** (*verbal prefix*) causative prefix; ex.: **иреклүэ:** *send, let go*; **ирефэ:** *to let (smb.) drink (smth.); иреху: *~ анхүэдэу: so be it.**

**ирегья~ (ирагья~)** (*verbal prefix*) causative prefix; ex.: **ирегьяклүэ:** *send*; **ирегьяфэ:** *to make (smb.) drink (smth.); Думэсарэ хьэцлэхэм шейр ирегьяфэ: Dumasara offered the guests tea.*

**при~ (ир~)** (*verbal prefix*) designates motion on, or along, surface; ex.: **лъягьуэм приклүэн:** *to follow the path.*

**клэ~ (клэщлэ~)** I (*verbal prefix*) designates action performed under smth.; ex.: **уэсыр жыг лъябжьэм клэщлэнтхуэн:** *to rake up the snow under the tree.*

**клэ~ (клэль~; клэлы~)** II (*verbal prefix*) immediately after; after, following; ex.: **мыщэм клэлыклүэн:** *to go after the bear*; **клэльэжьэн:** *(vi) to set off/ out after, to start after, to leave after (smb., smth.); клэльесын (vi) to swim after (smb., smth.).*

**кIэры~** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates action on surface of object which is in vertical position; ex.: *блыным лозунг кIэрытхэн: to write a slogan on the wall*; **2.** designates stay/sojourn on slope, on surface, of object; ex.: *мэлхэр бгым кIэрытиц: the sheep are on the slope of the mountain*; *Iэм ятIэ кIэрылъиц: there is mud on the hand*, **3.** designates separation from smb., smth.; ex. *ар сэ скIэрыклаиц: he left/let me alone*; *кIэрыдзэн: to throw (smth.) away from (smth.)*; **4.** designates compact adherence to smth.; ex.: *кIэрыкIэн: to adhere, grow fast (to smth.)*; *кIэрыгьуэн: to adhere (in drying) (to), to dry (on, to), to stick (to)*.

**кIэщI(э)~** (*verbal prefix*) designates action under smth.; *кIэщIэкIэцIэн: (vi) to lay an egg (under smth.)*; *кIэщIэлъхьэн: (vt) to put/lay (down) (smth.) under smth.*; *пхъаицIэм бгыкьу кIанэм пхъэ тыкьыр кIэщIилъхьаиц: the carpenter placed a log-piece under the end of the girder*.

**кIуэцIы~ (кIуэцIыры~)** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates motion (directed) inside, or from within (smth.), through (smth.); ex.: *кIуэцIыхун: to fall out (from inside smth.)*; *кIуэцIырыхун: to collapse, come down through (smth.)*; **2.** designates location of smb., smth., smwh.; or inside smth., or extraction of smb., smth. from smwh., or from inside smth.; ex.: *сабий ихыIэным кIуэцIылъхьэн: to wrap up the child in the blanket*.

**кьэ~** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates arrival, approach, movement directed to the speaker; ex.: *мафIэгур кьэсаиц: the train has got in*; **2.** designates approach of some season, time; ex.: *иIымахуэр кьэсаиц: winter has arrived*; **3.** adds a tinge of definiteness to the verb; ex.: *кьэпсэлъэн: to deliver a speech; to begin to speak*.

**кьуэ~ (кьыкьуэ~)** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates stay outside the limits (of), or behind (smth.); ex.: *бгым кьуэсын: to sit behind the mountain*; **2.** designates motion directed to back of some object; ex.: *кьуэлъэдэн: to run behind*; **3.** designates movement from behind some object; *дыгьэр бгым кьыкьуэкIаиц: the sun rose from behind the mountain*; *кьуэлъын: to look out from behind*.

**мы~** (*verbal prefix*) in combination with verbs, forms negative form; ex.: **мыгъэгъэн**: *not to flower, not to bloom/blossom*; **мыкӀын**: *not to grow*.

**нэ~** (**ны~**) (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates direction of motion from speaker to second person; *ар уи деж нэкӀуащ*: *he went to you*; *ар уи деж ныщӀыхъащ*: *he went to visit you*; **2.** forms verbs that convey a sense of completion of an action; ex.: **нэдысын**: *to finish (sewing)*; **нэвысын**: *to finish ploughing/tilling*; **нэджысын**: *to finish (reading), to read to the end*.

**пэ~** (**пы~**) (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates reciprocal action; ex.: **пэдыжын**: *to throw back*; **пэджэжын**: *to call in response, to respond*; **2.** designates motion directed away from, or towards, fore-part of smth.; **пэрыхуэн**: *to drive on from the front*; **3.** designates being (of smb., smth.) in front of some object, person; **пэгъэувын**: *to put/place/set in front of, before (smb., smth.)*; **пэувын**: *to stand in front of, before (smb., smth.)*; **4.** designates action timed to beginning of smth.; ex.: **пэрыхъэн**: *to draw near the beginning (of smth.)*.

**пе~** (*verbal prefix*) designates movement towards smb., smth.; conveys meeting (half-way), coming together; **фызым пежъэн**: *to go to meet/receive the woman*.

**пхы~** (**пхыры~**) (*verbal prefix*) designates action, motion directed through some obstacle, object; ex.: **пхырыжын**: *to run through smth.*; *шэр пхъэбгъум пхыкӀащ*: *the bullet went through the board*; **пхивыкӀын**: *to get wet/soaked through*.

**пы~** (*verbal prefix*) designates addition or joining, adherence; ex.: **пытхэн**: (*vt*) *to add (smth.) (in writing) to smth.*; *to finish (writing) (smth.)*; **пыкӀэн**: (*vi*) *to adhere, grow fast (to smth.)*.

**пыры~** (**пы~**) (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates action of transference over object that is of comparatively small height; ex.: **бжыхъым пырыплъын**: *to look over the fence*; **2.** designates action, motion directed across some obstacle; ex.: **псым пырышын** (*е зэпырышын*): *to*

*take/lead across the river; лъэмыжым нырышын: to take/lead across the bridge*

**те~** (*verbal prefix*) designates location/being on smth.; *тхылъыр Iэнэм тельц:* *the book is on the table.*

**тр~ (тре~)** (*verbal prefix*) designating motion directed on surface of object; ex.: *жыгым сымхъу трещлэ:* *the tree is covered with hoar-frost.*

**фIэ~ (фIы~)** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** means to be situated on smth.; smwh. more often on the point (edge) of smth.; expressed by preposition 'on'; ex.: **фIэсын** *vi* to sit on smth. sharp; **2.** designates action done against smb.'s will; ex.: *кIуэн:* *to go; фIэкIуэн:* (*vi*) *to go against smb.'s wish.*

**хэ~ (хы~)** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates being, sojourn in smth., smwh., and also in some organization; *нсым хэтын:* *to be in water; нартием хэтын:* *to be in a party; 2.* designates direction in/inside smth., in(to) some mass, joining some organization; *нсым хыхъэн:* *to go into water; нартием хыхъэн:* *to join the party.*

**ху(э)~** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates motion, movement towards an object, situated in opposition to the speaker; ex.: *унэм хуэкIуэн:* *to go to(wards) the house; 2.* designates action performed to please smb., for smb.'s sake, in smb.'s interests; ex.: *анэм Iуэху хуэцIэн:* *to carry out, do, implement (smth.) for (one's) mother; 3.* designates action conveying/expressing unfriendliness; ex.: *хуэпсэльэн:* *to slander, calumniate (smb.); хуэшхыдэн:* *to scold, abuse (smb.); 4.* designates action directed to(wards) an object; ex.: *сабийр анэм хуожэ:* *the child is running to his mother; ныбжьээгъум хуэтхын:* *to write to (one's) friend; ар и ныбжьээгъум фIыуэ хуцытц:* *he treats his friend nicely, he is nice to his friend; 5.* designates sign/indication of action; ex.: *абы вакъэр хуэхъауц:* *the boots fitted him just right; 6.* designates ability/skill to do/make smth.; ex.: *абы ар хуэхъынкъым:* *he is not able to carry this, he will not manage to carry this.*

**щхъэ~ (щхъэщы~; щхъэпыры~)** (*verbal prefix*) **1.** designates being or movement of object over surface of smth.; ex.: *пиэр бгым щхъэщытц:*

*the cloud hangs over the mountain; бгым **цхьэцылъэтын**: to fly over the mountain; 2. designates movement of object over smth., transference of object over/across smth.; ex.: бгым хьэлъэр **цхьэпырыхын**: to carry the load over/across the mountain.*

**щ(ы)~** (verbal prefix) designates abode/residence smwh.; *сэ мыбы сыщеджащ: I studied here; ар къалэм **щынсэуащ**: he lived in the city.*

**щлэ~ (щлы~)** (verbal prefix) **1.** designates being, staying inside premises, or some limited space; *ex. пхъэр гуэщым **щлэщ**: the firewood is in the shed; 2. designates direction inside premises or some limited space; ex.: нэщым **щлыхьэн**: to go into the room; 3. designates direction from within premises, or some limited space; ex.: нэщым **лэнэр щлэхын**: to take/carry the table out of the room; 4. designates being under smth.; ex.: щлэщлым **щлэтын**: to stand under the lean-to.*

**лү~** (verbal prefix) **1.** designates drawing near, approaching smb., smth.; *ex.: клэлындорым **лүхьэн**: to approach the corridor; 2. designates stay/sojourn near smb., smth.; ex.: мывэр бжэм **лүлщ**: the stone lies near the door; 3. designates quick visual movement towards an object; блэклым **лүплээн**: to cast a glance at the passer-by.*

## Verbal Infixes

**~мы~** negatory infix; *ex.: жылэ: say; жумылэ: do not say; къаклүэ: come; укъямыклүэ: do not come.*

## Verbal Suffixes

~ГЪЭ (~ГЪА) (*verbal suffix*) designates the past perfect, or pluperfect tense; ex.: *мхагъаиц*: he wrote once (upon a time); *жулагъаиц*: he once said.

~ГЪЭХЭ (~ХЭ) (*verbal suffix*) designates absolute accomplishment/realization of the action; ex.: *кIуагъэхэц*: he's already gone.

~Ж I (*verbal suffix*) designates recurrence/repetition of action; ex.: *къэсыжын*: to arrive again; *къэшэжын*: vi to bring again.

~Ж II (*verbal suffix*) designates performance of the action directly, without the intervention of another agent; ex.: *ихыжын*: to eat by oneself.

~ЕН (*verbal suffix*) designates action in an upward direction; ex.: *дэжyеун*: vi 1. to go upwards, or against flow of the river; 2. to rise (upwards); *дэльеун*: vi to jump/leap up.

~И (*connective suffix*) and, also; ex.: *къакIуи епль*: come and have a look.

~КIЭ (*verbal suffix*) designates absolute completeness of action; ex.: *силакIэц*: I have already done it.

~КЪЫМ (*verbal suffix*) negatory suffix; ex.: *хъэцIэр иджыри къэс къэсакъым*: the guest hasn't arrived yet; *сэ еджанIэм сыкIуакъым*: I didn't go to school.

~КЪУЭ (*verbal suffix*) designates excessiveness; ex.: *псэльэкъуэн*: vi 1. to talk (smb.) down, to out-talk (smb.); to talk too much; 2. to have a long talk (with smb.), to get carried away by a conversation (with smb.).

~ЛI (~ЛIЭ) (*verbal suffix*) designates action directed towards, or applied to smb., smth.; ex.: *ежэлIэн*: vi to run up (to smb., smth.), to come running up (to smb., smth.); *ехъэлIэн*: vt 1. to take, carry (smb., smth. to

*smb., smth.); хьэпшыпхэр аутобусым ~: to carry the articles to the bus; 2. to apply, put (smth.; ex.: one's strength, skill); къару нсору ~: to make efforts, to make/exert every effort; къекIуэлIауц: he appeared; he presented himself.*

**~м(э)** conditional suffix; ex.: *ар къакIуэмэ, сэ бэзэрым ськIуэнууц: If he comes, I will go to the market.*

**~ми** (conjunctive suffix) designates concessive mood; ex.: *укIуа~~ми~~*: even if you had gone.

**~н** infinitive forming suffix; ex.: *мхэ~~н~~: to write; кIуэ~~н~~: to go.*

**~нэ** (verbal suffix) designates completeness and fulfilment of the action; ex.: *илэжьи~~на~~уц: accomplished, realized, carried into effect; шхы~~нэ~~: vt to eat (up) (smth.) entirely.*

**~рей** (verbal suffix) designates recurrence, presence of a characteristic; ex.: *мэпсэлъэ~~рей~~: he is fond of talking; he is garrulous; мэдауэ~~рей~~: he is given to brawling; he is a brawler.*

**~рт** (verbal suffix) designates repetition/recurrence of action; ex.: *мхэ~~рт~~: he wrote repeatedly.*

**~т** (verbal suffix) designates the imperative mood; ex.: *жыIэ~~т~~: do say; just say; мхэ~~т~~: just write.*

**~тэмэ** (conjunctive suffix) designates subjunctive mood; ex.: *укIуа~~тэмэ~~: if you had gone.*

**~тэми** (conjunctive suffix) designates concessive mood; ex.: *укIуа~~тэми~~: even if you had gone.*

**~ф** (verbal suffix) designates the ability to perform the action indicated; ex.: *жыIэ~~фын~~: 1. vi to be able to speak/talk; to speak eloquently/articulately; 2. vt to know how to say (smth.); to manage to say (smth.); хьы~~фын~~: vt to manage, be able, to take/carry (away) (smth. smwh.).*

**~х** (*verbal suffix*) designates downward direction of action; ex.: *ежэхын*: vi 1. to roll down; to go/come down; to run down; *джабэм ежэхын*: to roll down the mountain slope; 2. to flow/run down (of river, brook, stream); *псыр джабэм хуабэжыу йожэх*: the river is streaming down the mountain slope; *ехэхын*: vt 1. to lower, sink (smb., smth.); *цхьэр ехэхын*: to hang one's head; 2. to let/get down, lower (smb., smth.); *работэхэр шахтэм ехэхын*: to get the workers down to the mine.

**~хэ** pluralizing suffix; ex.: *кьэкIуахэц*: they came.

**~хэ** (**~ххэ**) (*verbal suffix*) designates constant/absolute readiness/preparedness; ex.: *сыхьэзырыхэц*: I am always/absolutely ready.

**~хэ** (**~х**) (*verbal suffix*) designates preliminary condition; ex.: *зытхьэцIыхэн*: wash yourself first; *зытхьэцIыхи ихэ*: first wash yourself, and then eat.

**~ххэ** (*verbal suffix*) designates absolute negation; ex.: *сыкIуэххэнкьым*: I will definitely not go.

**~хь** (*verbal suffix*) **1.** designates action performed on a definite location or repetition of the action; *кьэжыхьын*: to run about; *кьэкIухьын*: to go/walk about; **2.** designates movement round an object; *Iуацхьэм кьэкIухьын*: to walk/go round the hill; *жыгым кьэкIухьын*: to walk/go round the tree; **3.** refers to the object of the action; ex.: *тенсэлъыхьын*: vi to discuss (smb., smth.); to speak/talk about (smb., smth.); *техьуцIыхьын*: vi to scold, abuse, reprove, rebuke, take to task, criticize (smb.).

**~ц** I affirmative suffix; ex.: *КьэкIуа ар?*; *НьтIэ, кьэкIуац*: Did he come?; Yes, he came.

**~ц** II (*verbal suffix*) designates excessiveness, or taking the action to excess; ex.: *ихэцIац*: he ate to excess; he gluttonized.



~щэрэ (~щэрэт) (*conjunctive suffix*) designates optative mood; ex.: *Налшык сыкгуащэрэ: if only I could go to Nalchik; I wish I could go to Nalchik.*

~лүэ (*verbal suffix*) designates slight excessiveness; ex.: *мхэлүэн: vi to write more than is necessary.*

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# КЪЭБЭРДЕЙ ФОНЕТИКЭ

## Kabardian Phonetics

Amjad Jaimoukha

This work describes the sounds of Kabardian using a (simplified) ‘standard’ phonetic transcription and a proposed Latinized system. It is mainly directed at the lay reader who either wants to learn the language or who is driven by curiosity to cast a quick look at the sounds of one of the more exotic languages of the world.

### Official Kabardian alphabet<sup>1</sup>

А	Ә*	Б	В	Г	Гу	Гъ	Гъу	Д	Дж
Дз	Е	Ё	Ж	Жъ	З	И	Й	К	Ку
КІ	КІу	Къ	Къу	Кхъ	Кхъу	Л	Лъ	ЛІ	М
Н	О	П	ПІ	Р	С	Т	ТІ	У	Ф
ФІ	Х	Ху	Хъ	Хъ	Хъу	Ц	ЦІ	Ч	Ш
Щ	ЩІ	Ы	Ә**	Ю	Я	І	Іу	Ъ	Ь

<sup>1</sup> B. M. Kardanov (ed.), *Kabardinsko-russki slovar'* [Kabardian-Russian Dictionary], Kabardino-Balkarian Science and Research Institute, Moscow: State Press of Foreign and National Dictionaries, 1957, p12.

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\* Schwa in Circassian words. Never initial.

\*\* In loan words.

In the examples column, the words are given in Cyrillic, Latinized equivalent (see A. Jaimoukha, 2009), and phonetic transcription, respectively. Corrections and suggestions (to [jaimoukha@gmail.com](mailto:jaimoukha@gmail.com)) are most welcome.

Cyrillic alphabet	Kabardian examples	English equivalent	Phonetic equivalent	Latinized equivalent
А а	<b>адэ</b> ( <i>ade</i> ) [a <u>d</u> ə]: there; father; <b>дамэ</b> ( <i>dame</i> ) [d <u>a</u> mə]: shoulder, wing; <b>мыра?</b> ( <i>mirə?</i> ) [m <u>i</u> rə?]: is it this?	dad, mad, bad	[a]	A a
Э э (initial only in loan words; see the other entry ‘э’ below)	<b>лъэпкъ</b> ( <i>lɛpɔq</i> ) [lʒ <u>ə</u> pɔq]: nation; race; breed; <b>напэ</b> ( <i>napɛ</i> ) [n <u>a</u> pə]: face	<i>schwa</i> ; heav <u>e</u> n	[ə]	E e
Б б	<b>балыджэ</b> ( <i>balije</i> ) [b <u>a</u> lidʒə]: radish; <b>нобэ</b> ( <i>nobe</i> ) [n <u>o</u> bə]: today; <b>къэб</b> ( <i>qeb</i> ) [q <u>ə</u> b]: pumpkin	B b	[b]	B b

<b>В в</b>	<b>ВЫ</b> ( <i>vi</i> ) [vi]: bull; <b>ГЪЭВЭН</b> ( <i>ghevən</i> ) [kʰəvən]: to boil; <b>бэв</b> ( <i>bəv</i> ) [bəv]: abundant (of crops)	<b>V v</b>	[v]	<b>V v</b>
<b>Г г</b>	<b>ГЫН</b> ( <i>gin</i> ) [χin]: gunpowder; <b>ГЪУЭГЫН</b> ( <i>ghwegin</i> ) [ɸʷəχin]: to weep; <b>ЖЫГ</b> ( <i>zhig</i> ) [ʒiχ]: tree	<i>Spanish/Dutch g</i> , e.g. <i>lago</i> [In some Kabardian dialects, ‘r’ in non- initial positions is pronounced as ‘й’]	[χ]	<b>G g</b>
<b>Гу гу</b>	<b>ГУ</b> ( <i>gw</i> ) [gʷ]: heart; <b>ГУЭГУЭН</b> ( <i>gwegwen</i> ) [gʷəgʷən]: large metal pitcher; <b>дэгу</b> ( <i>degw</i> ) [dəgʷ]: deaf	<b>Gwent</b> , hard ‘g’ followed by very short ‘u’ (as first sound of the English word ‘wood’)	[gʷ]	<b>Gw gw</b>
<b>Гъ гъ</b>	<b>ГъащIэ</b> ( <i>ghasch’e</i> ) [kʰaʃʰə]: life; <b>ГЪЭГЪА</b> ( <i>ghegha</i> ) [kʰəka]: flower; <b>ГЪЭДЫРГЪ</b> ( <i>ghedirgh</i> ) [kʰədɪrɸ]: clang	<i>Parisian r</i>	[ɸ]	<b>Gh gh</b>
<b>Гъу гъу</b>	<b>ГЪУЭГУ</b> ( <i>ghwegw</i> ) [ɸʷəgʷ]: way, road; <b>МЫГЪУЭ</b> ( <i>mighwe</i> ) [miɸʷə]: misfortune; <b>ГЪУНЭГЪУ</b> ( <i>ghwneghw</i> )	<b>Гъ + w</b> <i>Parisian r</i> followed by very short ‘u’ (as first sound of the English word ‘wood’)	[ɸʷ]	<b>Ghw ghw</b>

	[ʁ <sup>w</sup> nəʁ <sup>w</sup> ]: neighbour			
Д д	дэнэ ( <u>d</u> ene) [dənə]: where; дадэ ( <u>d</u> ade) [dadə]: grandpa; джэд ( <u>d</u> ed) [dʒəd]: hen	D d	[d]	D d
Дж дж	джэгун ( <u>d</u> egwn) [dʒəɡ <sup>w</sup> n]: to play; еджапé ( <u>d</u> ejap'e) [jədʒap'ə]: school; дыдж ( <u>d</u> ij) [didʒ] : bitter	J j	[dʒ]	J j
Дз дз	дзэ ( <u>d</u> ze) [dʒə]: tooth; army; едзын ( <u>d</u> edzin) [jədʒin]: to hurl; гүэдз ( <u>d</u> gwedz) [g <sup>w</sup> ədʒ]: wheat	adze	[dʒ]	Dz dz
Е е  (never in final position)	ен ( <u>e</u> en) [jən]: whole, entire; зекIyэ ( <u>e</u> zik'we) [zek <sup>w</sup> ə]: campaign, outing	when initial: y + schwa (as in 'yep'); when in middle of word: day (short and undiphthongized)	initial: [jə]  middle: [e]	initial: Ye ye  middle: ei
Ё ё	only in Russian adoptions: ёлкэ ( <u>e</u> olke) [jolkə]: fir(-tree);	York	[jo]	Yo yo

	ёрш ( <i>yorsh</i> ) [jorʃ]: ruff (small freshwater fish)			
<b>Ж ж</b>	<b>жэм</b> ( <i>zhem</i> ) [ʒəm]: cow; <b>кьяажэ</b> ( <i>qwazhe</i> ) [qʷaʒə]: village; <b>льэмыж</b> ( <i>lhemizh</i> ) [ʒəmiʒ]: bridge	genre, erasure	[ʒ]	<b>Zh zh</b>
<b>ЖЬ жь</b>	<b>жьэ</b> ( <i>zche</i> ) [ʒə]: mouth; <b>мажьэ</b> ( <i>mazche</i> ) [mazə]: comb; <b>лэгьупэжь</b> ( <i>leghwpezch</i> ) [ləʷpəʒ]: leader of herdsmen	<i>alveolo-palatal zh</i>	[ʒ]	Zch zch
<b>З з</b>	<b>зы</b> ( <i>zi</i> ) [zi]: one; <b>Іэзэ</b> ( <i>'eze</i> ) [ʔəzə]: skilful; <b>мэз</b> ( <i>mez</i> ) [məz]: forest	Z z	[z]	Z z
<b>И и</b>	<b>ибэ</b> ( <i>yibe</i> ) [jibə]: orphan; <b>тхыльибл</b> ( <i>txilhiybl</i> ) [txitʒijbl]: seven books; <b>си</b> ( <i>siy</i> ) [sij]: my	when initial it is pronounced as ‘Yi’ in Yiddish; when within word or final, it is pronounced as ‘ee’ in see	initial: [ji] middle or final: [ij]	initial: Yi yi middle or final: iy

<p><b>Й й</b></p>	<p><b>йоплъэ (yoplhe)</b> [jopɫə]: ([he/she] is looking/looks into smth.); <b>фӀейуэ (f'eiywe)</b> [f'ejwə]: in a dirty manner; <b>фӀей (f'eiy) [f'ej]:</b> dirty</p>	<p>hay, day</p>	<p>[j]</p>	<p>Y y</p>
<p><b>К к</b></p>	<p>there are no native words in literary Kabardian that have this sound; the equivalent is <i>ch</i>; used only in dialects and loan words, e.g. <b>кӀассэ (kasse)</b> [kassə]: cash-desk; <b>стӀэкан (stekan)</b> [stəkan]: cup, glass; <b>рак (rak) [rak]:</b> cancer</p>	<p>К к</p>	<p>[k]</p>	<p>К к</p>
<p><b>Ку ку</b></p>	<p><b>кӀу (kw) [kʷ]:</b> middle, centre; <b>дӀэкӀун (dekwn)</b> [dəkʷn]: to cram, stuff; <b>хӀэкӀу (xekw) [xəkʷ]:</b> country</p>	<p>could</p>	<p>[kʷ]</p>	<p>Kw kw</p>

<b>КІ кІ</b>	<b>кІэ (ch'e)</b> [tʃ'ə]: tail, end; <b>хэКІын (xech'in)</b> [xətʃ'in]: to emerge (from some mass); <b>ФІэкІ (f'ech')</b> [f'ətʃ]: except	<b>ч</b> followed by glottal stop	[tʃʷ]	Ch' ch'
<b>КІу кІу</b>	<b>кІуэн (k'wen)</b> [kʷən]: to go; <b>кьэКІуэн (qek'wen)</b> [qəkʷən]: to come; <b>емыКІу (yemik'w)</b> [jəmikʷ]: improper	<b>к</b> у with glottal stop after <b>к</b>	[kʷ]	K'w k'w
<b>Кь кь</b>	<b>кьакІуэ (qak'we)</b> [qakʷə]: come here; <b>адакьэ (adaqe)</b> [adaqə]: cock; <b>кьыкь (qiq)</b> [qiq]: stammerer	Arabic ق	[q]	Q q
<b>Кьу кьу</b>	<b>кьуэлэн (qwelen)</b> [qʷələn]: speckled, spotted; <b>дыкьуакьуэ (diqwaqwe)</b> [diqʷaqʷə]: fork, bifurcation; <b>мэКьу (meqʷ)</b> [məqʷ]: hay	<b>кь</b> + <b>w</b> w = very short 'u' (as in first sound of English 'wood')	[qʷ]	Qw qw
<b>Кхь кхь</b>	<b>кхьаблэ (q'able)</b>	<b>кь</b> + <b>хь</b>	[qχ]	Q' q'



	<p>[qχablə]: grave;  <b>фIэкхьыу</b> (<i>f'eq'iu</i>)  [f'əqχiu]: absolutely;  <b>бэкхь</b> (<i>beq'</i>) [bəqχ]:  cow-shed</p>			
<b>Кхьу</b> <b>кхьу</b>	<p><b>кхьуэ</b> (<i>q'we</i>) [qχ<sup>w</sup>ə]:  pig, swine;  <b>хыкхьуэ</b> (<i>xiq'we</i>)  [xiqχ<sup>w</sup>ə]: porpoise  (sea creature);  <b>кIакхьу</b> (<i>ch'aq'w</i>)  [tʃ'aqχ<sup>w</sup>]: gun cocking  piece</p>	<p><b>кхь</b> + <b>w</b>  <b>w</b> = very short 'u'  (as in first sound of  English 'wood')</p>	[qχ <sup>w</sup> ]	Q'w q'w
<b>Л л</b>	<p><b>лы</b> (<i>li</i>) [li]: meat;  дэлэн (<i>delen</i>)  [dələn]: pie;  <b>мыл</b> (<i>mil</i>) [mil]: ice</p>	L l	[l]	L l
<b>Ль ль</b>	<p><b>л̥апIэ</b> (<i>lhap'e</i>)  [l̥ap'ə]: expensive;  дэ<b>л̥</b>эн (<i>delhen</i>)  [dəɫən]: to stroke;  <b>гул̥</b> (<i>gwlh</i>) [g<sup>w</sup>ɫ]:  bud</p>	Welsh <b>ll</b> , e.g. Llewellyn	[ɫ]	Lh lh
<b>Лл лл</b>	<p><b>л̥ы</b> (<i>l'i</i>) [ɫ'i]: man;  <b>мыл̥</b>Iэн (<i>mil'en</i>)  [milɫ'ən]: not to die;</p>	<i>л̥</i> followed by glottal stop	[ɫ']	L' l'

	<p><b>пшыл</b> (<i>pschil'</i>) [pʃilʒʲ]: slave</p>			
<b>М м</b>	<p><b>модэ</b> (<i>mode</i>) [mɔdɛ]: there; <b>къамэ</b> (<i>qame</i>) [qamɛ]: dagger; <b>уэрам</b> (<i>weram</i>) [wɛram]: street</p>	M m	[m]	M m
<b>Н н</b>	<p><b>нэ</b> (<i>ne</i>) [nɛ]: eye; <b>уанэ</b> (<i>wane</i>) [wanɛ]: saddle; <b>сын</b> (<i>sin</i>) [sin]: statue, monument</p>	N n	[n]	N n
<b>О о</b>  (initial only in loan words; final in very few words)	<p><b>опыт</b> (<i>opit</i>) [ɔpit]: experiment, test; <b>содэ</b> (<i>sode</i>) [sɔdɛ]: I accept; <b>псѡ</b> (<i>psɔ</i>) [psɔ]: unharmed, intact; <b>лъэпѡщхьэпѡ</b> (<i>lɛposchɛpɔ</i>) [ʒɛpɔ ʃɛpɔ]: barrier, hurdle</p>	<i>So (not diphthongized)</i>	[ɔ]	O o
<b>П п</b>	<p><b>пэ</b> (<i>pe</i>) [pɛ]: nose; <b>напэ</b> (<i>nape</i>) [napɛ]: face;</p>	P p	[p]	P p

	<b>ныц</b> ( <i>nip</i> ) [nip]: flag			
<b>П п</b>	<b>п</b> лэрэ? ( <i>p'ere?</i> ) [p'ərə?]: really?; <b>п</b> ланы ( <i>p'ap'u</i> ) [p'a p'u]: milk (child's word); <b>І</b> рып ( <i>'erip'</i> ) [?ərip']: domesticated, tame	<b>p</b> followed by <i>glottal stop</i>	[p']	P' p'
<b>Р р</b> (initial only in loan words)	<b>р</b> оман ( <i>roman</i> ) [roman]: novel; <b>м</b> рэм ( <i>merem</i> ) [mərem]: Friday; <b>м</b> ыр ( <i>mir</i> ) [mir]: this	rat ( <i>'rolled'</i> )	[r]	R r
<b>С с</b>	<b>с</b> ымаджэ ( <i>simaje</i> ) [simadʒə]: sick, ill; <b>к</b> лүэсэн ( <i>k'wesən</i> ) [kʷəsən]: to elope; <b>т</b> ыс ( <i>t'is</i> ) [t'is]: sit down	<b>S s</b>	[s]	S s
<b>Т т</b>	<b>т</b> анэ ( <i>tane</i> ) [tanə]: calf; <b>с</b> ату ( <i>satu</i> ) [satu]: trade; <b>к</b> ьат ( <i>qat</i> ) [qat]: level, layer	<b>T t</b>	[t]	T t

<b>ТІ тІ</b>	<b>тІы</b> ( <i>t'i</i> ) [t'i]: ram; <b>ятІэ</b> ( <i>yat'e</i> ) [yat'ə]: mud; <b>уэтІпсытІ</b> ( <i>wet'psit'</i> ) [wət'psit']: damp (of weather)	<i>t</i> followed by glottal stop	[tʔ]	T' t'
<b>У у</b>	<b>үнэ</b> ( <i>wine</i> ) [winə]: house; <b>үадэ</b> ( <i>wade</i> ) [wadə]: hammer; <b>пүд</b> ( <i>pud</i> ) [pud]: cheap; <b>кьэүат</b> ( <i>qewat</i> ) [qəwat]: nutritious; <b>кьарү</b> ( <i>qaru</i> ) [qaru]: strength <b>псынщІэү</b> ( <i>psinsch'ew</i> ) [psinʃ'əw]: quickly	initial and followed by consonant as in 'win'; long as in 'moon'; short as in 'wag'	initial and followed by consonant: [wi] long: [u] short: [w]	initial and followed by consonant: Wi wi long: U u short: W w
<b>Ф ф</b>	<b>фэ</b> ( <i>fe</i> ) [fə]: skin; <b>кьэфэн</b> ( <i>qefen</i> ) [qəfən]: to dance; <b>нэф</b> ( <i>nef</i> ) [nəf]: blind	F f	[f]	F f
<b>ФІ фІ</b>	<b>фІы</b> ( <i>f'i</i> ) [f'i]: of good quality; <b>зэфІэкІ</b> ( <i>zef'ech'</i> ) [zəf'ətʃ']: initiative;	<i>f</i> followed by glottal stop	[fʔ]	F' f'

	<p><b>лЫѲІ</b> (<i>l'if'</i>) [lʲ'ifʲ]: good man</p>			
<b>X x</b>	<p><b>хадэ</b> (<i>xade</i>) [xadə]: garden; <b>махэ</b> (<i>maxe</i>) [maxə]: weak; <b>зыкъизых</b> (<i>zikiyzix</i>) [ziqijzix]: well-dressed</p>	<p><i>Scottish/German ch</i>, e.g. loch, ich</p>	[x]	X x
<b>Xy xy</b>	<p><b>ху</b> (<i>xw</i>) [x<sup>w</sup>]: millet; <b>къэщэхун</b> (<i>geschexwn</i>) [qəʃəx<sup>w</sup>n]: to buy; <b>дэльху</b> (<i>delhxw</i>) [dəʎx<sup>w</sup>]: brother (of a woman)</p>	<p><b>x + w</b> <i>Scottish/German ch</i>, e.g. loch, ich, followed by very short 'u' (as in first sound of English 'wood')</p>	[x <sup>w</sup> ]	Xw xw
<b>Хь хь</b>	<p><b>хьэ</b> (<i>he</i>) [hə]: dog; barley; <b>пыхьэн</b> (<i>pihen</i>) [pihən]: to wear; <b>кхьухь</b> (<i>q'wh</i>) [qχ<sup>w</sup>h]: ship</p>	<p><i>Arabic ħ</i></p>	[ħ]	Н h
<b>Хь хь</b>	<p><b>хьарбыз</b> (<i>x'arbiz</i>) [χarbiz]: water-melon; <b>мальхьэ</b> (<i>malhx'e</i>) [malʎxə]: son-in-law; <b>цырхь</b> (<i>tsirx'</i>) [cirχ]: flimsy</p>	<p><i>Spanish j</i>, e.g. jarra <i>Arabic ħ</i></p>	[χ]	X' x'

Хьу хьу	<b>хьумэн (x'wmen)</b> [χ <sup>w</sup> mən]: to guard, protect; <b>мыхьур (mix'wr)</b> [miχ <sup>w</sup> r]: seal; <b>жьэхьу (zchex'w)</b> [zəχ <sup>w</sup> ]: rude person	x' + w <i>Spanish j</i> (or Arabic ج) followed by very short 'u' (as in first sound of English 'wood')	[χ <sup>w</sup> ]	X'w x'w
Ц ц	<b>цы (tsi)</b> [ci]: hair; <b>бацэ (batse)</b> [bacə]: shaggy; <b>лыц (lits)</b> [lic]: moss	cats, bits	[c]	Ts ts
Цц цц	<b>ццэ (ts'e)</b> [c'ə]: name; <b>маццэ (mats'e)</b> [mac'ə]: grasshopper, locust; <b>кццэ (k'wets')</b> [k <sup>w</sup> əc']: internal	ц (ts) followed by glottal stop	[c']	Ts' ts'
Ч ч	<b>чын (chin)</b> [tʃin]: whirligig; <b>пычын (pichin)</b> [pitʃin]: to tear off; <b>хьэлэч (helech)</b> [hələtʃ]: bad, spoilt	chest, chair	[tʃ]	Ch ch
Ш ш	<b>шатэ (shate)</b> [ʃatə]: soured cream; <b>къэшэн (qeshen)</b> [qəʃən]: fiancée;	shoot	[ʃ]	Sh sh

	<b>ЕМЫЗЭШ (yemizesh)</b> [jəmizəʃ]: indefatigable			
<b>Щ щ</b>	<b>ЩЭН (schen)</b> [ʃən]: to sell; <b>ПЩАЩЭ</b> ( <i>pschasche</i> ) [pʃaʃə]: girl; <b>УЭЩ (wesch)</b> [wəʃ]: axe	<i>alveolo-palatal sh</i>	[ʃ]	Sch sch
<b>ЩІ щі</b>	<b>ЩІАЛЭ (sch'ale)</b> [ʃ'alə]: boy, lad; <b>ХЬЭЩІЭ (hesch'e)</b> [ħəʃ'ə]: guest; <b>ПЩІЫПЩІ</b> ( <i>psch'ipsch'</i> ) [pʃ'ipʃ']: sparkling	<i>щ followed by glottal stop</i>	[ʃʰ]	Sch' sch'
<b>Ы ы</b>	<b>ЫІЫ (i'i)</b> [i'i]: no; <b>ФЫЗ (fiz)</b> [fi:z]: woman; <b>КЪАМЫШЫ (qamishi)</b> [qamiʃi]: whip	bin, din, sin	[i]	I i (only initial in interjections)
<b>Э э</b>	<b>ЭКСПОНАТ (eksponat)</b> [əkspɒnat]: exhibit; <b>ЭРЭ (ere)</b> [ərə]: era	<i>schwa</i>	[ə]	E e
<b>Ю ю</b>	only in foreign words; <b>ЮМОР (umor)</b> [ju:ɒr]: humour;	<b>you, new</b>	[ju]	Yu yu

	<b>бюджет</b> ( <i>b<u>y</u>udzhet</i> ) [bj <u>u</u> dʒet]: budget; <b>бюро</b> ( <i>b<u>y</u>uro</i> ) [bj <u>u</u> ro]: bureau; office			
<b>Я я</b>	<b>я</b> пэ ( <i>ya<u>p</u>e</i> ) [ja <u>p</u> ə]: first; <b>дяпэж</b> э ( <i>dy<u>a</u>pech'e</i> ) [dja <u>p</u> ətʃ'ə]: henceforth, from now on; <b>ульи</b> я ( <i>wilhi<u>y</u>ya</i> ) [wilʒijja]: rusty	yam, yak	[ja]	Ya ya
<b>І І</b>	<b>І</b> нэ ( <i>'ene</i> ) [ʔənə]: three-legged table; <b>кхы</b> Іэ! ( <i>Q'i'e!</i> ) [qχiʔə!]: Please!; <b>уэ</b> І! ( <i>We'!</i> ) [wəʔ!]: Oh! (expression of unexpected joy)	<i>glottal stop</i>	[ʔ]	' '
<b>Іу Іу</b>	<b>Іу</b> ( <i>'w</i> ) [ʔ <sup>w</sup> ]: mouth; <b>жы</b> ІэдаІуэ ( <i>zhi'eda'we</i> ) [ʒiʔədaʔ <sup>w</sup> ə]: obedient; <b>щы</b> Іу ( <i>sch'i'w</i> ) [ʃ'iʔ <sup>w</sup> ]: top, upper part; button	<b>І + w</b> glottal stop followed by very short 'u' (as in first sound of English 'wood')	[ʔ <sup>w</sup> ]	'W 'w



## Consonants

place of articulation ↓	type →	resonant/sonorous	trilled	spirant			occlusive			affricative			
				voiced	voiced	voiced	voiceless	supraglottal	voiced	voiceless, aspirated	supraglottal	voiced	voiceless
bi-labial		<b>м</b>						<b>б</b>	<b>п</b>	<b>пІ</b>			
labio-dental				<b>в</b>	<b>ф</b>	<b>фІ</b>							
dental		<b>н</b>		<b>з</b>	<b>с</b>			<b>д</b>	<b>т</b>	<b>тІ</b>	<b>дз</b>	<b>ц</b>	<b>цІ</b>
lateral				<b>л</b>	<b>ль</b>	<b>лІ</b>							
front hard-palate			<b>р</b>	<b>жь</b>	<b>щ</b>	<b>щІ</b>							
middle hard-palate				<b>ж</b>	<b>ш, й</b>						<b>дж</b>	<b>ч</b>	<b>кІ</b>
back hard-palate				<b>г</b>	<b>х, к, ху</b>			<b>гу</b>	<b>ку</b>	<b>кІу</b>			
back soft-palate				<b>гь, гьу</b>	<b>хь, хьу</b>				<b>кхь, кхьу</b>	<b>кь, кьу</b>			
guttural					<b>хь</b>								
glottal								<b>І, Іу</b>					

## Vowels

Vowels: **а, э, и, ы, у, о, е**

Semi-vowels: **й, у**

	front (not labialized)	mid (not labialized)	back (labialized)
high (raised)	<b>и</b>		<b>у</b>
medium/middle	<b>е</b>	<b>а    э</b>	<b>о</b>
low		<b>ы</b>	

- а** medium raised, mid-vowel (not labialized) [corresponds to the ‘a’ in English ‘sat’]
- э** medium raised, mid-vowel (not labialized), short version of ‘a’ [= schwa]
- и** high raised, front vowel (not labialized) [‘weed’, ‘seen’]
- ы** low raised, mid-vowel (not labialized), very short [‘sit’, ‘did’]
- у** high raised, back vowel (labialized). It could be a full vowel, or a semi-vowel. Full vowel: **джэду** = cat; **къанцилу** = reed-pipe (musical instrument); **бру** = gimlet, auger (boring tools). Semi-vowel: **уафэ** = sky (‘ya’ is pronounced as a diphthong ‘wack’, ‘wax’); **уэн** = to hit, beat; **уэс** = snow.
- о** medium raised, back vowel (labialized). Non-diphthongised ‘o’ in ‘so’. **Сокилуэ** = I am going; **содэ** = I accept. The combination of the semi-vowel ‘й’ followed by the vowel ‘о’, ‘йо’, as in **йоплэ** ([he/she] is looking/looks into smth.), is pronounced as a diphthong, as in ‘York’, ‘yoyo’.
- е** medium raised, front vowel (not labialized). The combination of the vowel ‘е’ followed by the semi-vowel ‘й’, ‘ей’ as in **уней** (private; personal), or **япрей** (ordinal number = first) is pronounced as a diphthong as in RP (received pronunciation) British ‘day’.

The ‘length’ of the vowel is in general dependent on the stress and the tempo of speech. Generally, stressed vowels take longer values.

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results of a quantitative phonetic study of Kabardian, a Northwest Caucasian language that is of typological interest from a phonetic standpoint. A number of cross-linguistically rare properties are examined. These features include the phonetic realization of Kabardian's small vowel inventory, which contains only three contrastive vowel qualities (two short vowels and one long vowel), spectral characteristics of the ten supralaryngeal voiceless fricatives of Kabardian, as well as the acoustic, palatographic, and aerodynamic characteristics of ejective fricatives, an extremely rare type of segment cross-linguistically. In addition, basic properties of the consonant stop series are explored, including closure duration and voice onset time, in order to test postulated universals linking these properties to place of articulation and laryngeal setting]

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## **АДЫГЭ ЛЕКСИКОГРАФИЕ: АДЫГЭ ПСАЛЪАЛЪЭХЭР**

Зэхуэзыхьэсар: Жэмыхьуэ Амджэдш

## **Circassian Lexicography: Bibliography of Circassian Dictionaries**

Collected by Amjad Jaimoukha

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## **АДЫГЭБЗЭ ХЪУМЭНЫГЪЭМ И ИЭМАЛХЭР**

### **Maintenance of the Circassian Language**

#### **The Economical Aspects of Preserving the Circassian Language – An Introduction to the AZa Programme (Адыгэбзэ Зэдывгъащэ)**

By Kamal Jalouqa<sup>1</sup>

An elderly neighbour once commented on my efforts to learn how to read and write Circassian by saying that “this will not feed you any bread”, meaning that it would be better for a young person like me to learn some skills which would help him in finding a job or in his economic life in general.

This paper is about the economics of language in general and threatened minority languages in particular, and how we can employ economic concepts and personal and community finance management in the conservation and improvement of the Circassian language and widening its use as a communication medium. In the first part, I will try to create an understanding of the importance of the economic aspects of language conservation, and in the second part I will explain a programme for transforming the Circassian language (Adigebze) from a conserved heritage into a medium of communication and transaction of ideas and human intellectual products, not only among native Circassians in the

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<sup>1</sup> Kamal Jalouqa has been working on issues concerned with Circassian language and culture for decades. Currently, he is actively involved in the drive to revive Circassian language use in Jordan through his work in the International Centre for Circassian Studies.

homeland and the diaspora, but among a growing number of interested users of the language worldwide.

Languages in general are subjected to the effects of globalisation, and tend to be influenced by international languages. The political, economic, and military strength of the British Empire in the 19th century, and of the United States in the 20th century, has led English to become the global language of economic life. Fluency in English is thus beneficial to anyone in the world who wishes to share in the fruits of economic globalization. Many people choose to learn the market-dominant language, not because they feel it reflects their personal identity, but because it serves a valuable instrumental function of facilitating access to money. The value of a market-dominant language is largely derived from “network effects,” the value placed by a consumer on a certain commodity increases as others use this commodity. If the value of English increases as others use it, it follows that the value decreases when this use decreases. If the primary source of the value of a commodity is “network effects,” then collective decisions to use or not to use the commodity can significantly control its value. Furthermore, the value of a commodity which derives largely from network effects can only be controlled through collective decisions, and not by individual actions or choices.

Minority languages (Circassian or Adigebeze as an example) and the right to preserve them in social context have always been treated as preserving a human right of the minority communities. On the opposite stand, anti-conservationists claim that the effort given to the preservation of these languages and cultures could be better devoted to the integration of these languages and cultures into the larger communities or nations in which they are situated.

Circassian as a minority language is bound to face marginalisation and even extinction in a few generations if measures are not taken to broaden its use in the social and business arena and to make it a language of mass communication. Actually, Circassian is the main language used in the bazaars of the towns of Nalchik and Bakhsan in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, and this is a phenomenon worth witnessing. In order to reach at some practical recommendations on this front, we should understand

how language economics can help in understanding the relationships between language and development in general, and specifically how a minority language can help an individual in living a better life and give him or her additional means of competitiveness in personal preferences.

In response to the threats to the existence of minority languages and cultures in an era of globalisation, regional linguistic and cultural pluralism is being increasingly promoted by language planners, academics, industry and policy-makers alike. The renewed political commitment to minority language cultures contradicts modernisation and development theories, derived from both classical and neo-classical economics, which have rendered culture and linguistic diversity anathemas. Indeed, today's commentators are more likely to view minority languages, and their associated cultural attributes, as a potential resource for socio-economic development, and more than just a cultural right.

A specific concern with the positive conceptual and empirical links between development and language-related processes has developed slowly. The general notion has gained currency in recent years amidst a general trend of "re-culturation". New models for the effective maintenance of minority languages advocate that cultural survival is an integral component of economic and social development. Others have drawn attention to the fact that many of the resources and processes required for minority language maintenance are similar to those required for socio-economic development in general, as one minority language academic comments: "Modern revitalisation programs for minority cultures are in many aspects revitalisation programs for peripheral regions, as it is evident from the example of the rather developed Catalan region, but also of traditionally peripheral regions such as Wales or Scotland". The same notion could be applied to the North Caucasus region in the Russian Federation and the region of Uzunyala in Turkey, as these regions are some of the areas concerned with the conservation of the Circassian language.

However, the causal relationships between language, culture and patterns of socio-economic development are far from clear. Industrialisation, economic integration, and political reorganisation are believed to have

accelerated the process of English language domination and homogenisation, and this explains in part the demise of the world's languages in absolute terms, and the marginalisation of indigenous languages. Whether minority languages can have an assured place in post-modern society is still uncertain. The Circassian language can be viewed from this perspective, and we can seek the possible means for its revitalisation as a language of social and economic communication and further develop it to absorb contemporary ideas and means of communication, such as the Internet.

We can begin by asking: 'What is happening to the world's languages?'. The answer is that they are depleting in absolute number and at an accelerating rate. Scholars forecast that, at the current rate of language depletion, at least 50 percent of today's languages will be extinct by the end of the 21st Century. That represents a decline from approximately 6,000 languages, to 3,000 languages. Other commentators are less optimistic and estimate that 90 percent of existing languages will be inactive by the end of the Century. However, predicting language dynamics is fraught with difficulties. Language change, rather than stasis, is the historical pattern and many predictions have been proved wrong, due to internal and external factors relating to language use, status and functions. Understanding the causal explanations requires us to examine a range of socio-political, economic and geographical factors (all of which are interrelated), which have historically served, during the last two centuries, to strengthen, both demographically and geographically, some languages at the expense of others. Central to this debate has been the mixed fortunes of constituent language groups in the building of the modern nation-state, and the role of language in exchange and economic growth.

Prior to this, it is useful to outline the myriad of language contexts and clarify some of the ambiguous terminology relating to 'minority languages'. Romaine suggests that the following factors and processes are implicated in, if not entirely responsible for, the causes of language shift:

The numerical strength of the group in relation to other minorities and majorities, social class, religious and

educational background, settlement patterns, ties with the homeland, degree of similarity between the minority and majority language, extent of exogamous marriage, attitudes of majority and minority, government policy towards language and education of minorities, and patterns of language use.

The relationship between economic integration and modernisation and language is generally highlighted through studies of developmental influence on the homogenization of the world's languages, and the continuing depletion of minority languages. The dominant opinion, and the majority of econocentric empirical research, asserts that economic processes are responsible for the decline in linguistic diversity. Aside from descriptive, historical accounts of individual minority language shift, the most relevant empirical studies have been conducted at the macro level, and have sought to test linguistic heterogeneity as an explanatory factor in differential economic performance. There are, however, both conceptual and practical difficulties in analysing this relationship.

For human beings, the choices made available by economic opportunities play an important role in the exercise of individual autonomy. But other options, such as the possibility of remaining connected to one's family and ancestral community through a particular language, are also critical to the exercise of individual autonomy. In monolingual societies, the optimization of the market may not negatively impact the access of some individuals to these relational resources. But in multilingual societies, the market is optimized, and greater economic opportunities become available, with the dominance of one shared language. As a result, the abundance of economic opportunities puts pressures on linguistic diversity, and makes it difficult for speakers of non-dominant languages to maintain and transmit their ancestral tongue.

Linguists concur that minority languages all over the world are giving way to more dominant languages, such as English, Mandarin, and Spanish, among others. The realities of commerce and the seductive power of world pop culture are placing pressure on speakers of minority

languages to learn majority languages or suffer the consequences: greater difficulty doing business, less access to information, etc.

These pressures are inducing a rapid die-off of languages around the world as we have previously explained. The Ubykh language for example, which is one of the ancient Circassian languages, and which survived the great Circassian exodus of the 19th century, has become extinct at the end of the twentieth century and is placed in the museums, as linguists recorded it. Futurists have noted this loss with no little despair, for significant, culturally specific information may disappear along with a language. For instance, knowledge about unique medicines and treatments used by aboriginal groups could be lost forever if the language used to transmit that information is banned by a majority culture.

The common wisdom is that globalization is the wave of the future, and in many respects this is undeniable. However, swept up in this conventional wisdom is the notion that languages and cultures will simply cease to exist, and people will instead choose "global" cultures and languages that will transcend boundaries.

This is not the only potential scenario. It is possible for globalization and new technology to safeguard cultural identity while simultaneously allowing free exchanges of ideas and goods. For centuries, dialects and languages have been unifying to facilitate national identity, scientific research, and commerce. Without question, there will be a need for common languages, as standardization allows growth in software and in people. But global prosperity and new technologies may also allow smaller cultures to preserve their niches. It is clear from several modern examples that a dying or dead language can turn around and become vibrant again, depending on people's determination and the government policies that are put in place.

### **Reversing Language Loss**

The idea of saving languages is very modern. When linguistics scholar Joshua A. Fishman (1990) first wrote of "Reversing Language Shift" in his book of that title, one reviewer actually laughed at the notion. The conventional wisdom among linguists, historians, and sociologists was

that, if your culture and language were on the way out, their doom was assured in a globalized world. After all, the prevailing trends are towards globalization and a unified world. Dialects spoken by small communities, such as Breton, the Celtic language spoken in Western France, are diminishing.

The first feature of language, its ability to express understandable commands that facilitate human interactions and transactions, is what makes it important to share common language in the economic and political arenas. Having a shared language lowers the costs of financial and political transactions. To the extent that people from different cultural backgrounds engage in joint co-operative activities, such as economic transactions, and political debate, the existence of a dominant language, such as English in the world of global commerce, is indispensable.

But the second feature of language, the impossibility of perfect translation, tends to make the diversity of languages important to individual autonomy. Because different languages provide different insights and different approaches to value, the continued use of a variety of languages is bound to enhance autonomy. Linguistic diversity can multiply the range of options available and the opportunities for the expression of human creativity and freedom.

The impossibility of perfect translation, and the third feature, the centrality of language to identity formation, leads persons to experience their ancestral language in particular as central to their distinctive individual identities and their sense of self-respect. For most people, even those who are fluent in more than one language, their dominant language plays a central role in their sense of who they are. Because of the impossibility of perfect translation, even people who are bilingual find it difficult to express their full identities in their non-dominant language. Even if they are able to communicate effectively and execute transactions in a particular language, it is often said that a person's sense of humour, for instance, is very difficult to express in a foreign language.

Another concept that will be important for understanding the economics of language is the concept of Language Capital. Language Capital is a subset of human capital, as are the enhanced productivity acquired through schooling, job training, health, information, etc. Language Capital satisfies the three essential requirements of human capital:

(1) It is embodied in the person. Language skills cannot be separated from the person, as could, say, a house or a car.

(2) It is costly to create. Time and often out-of-pocket costs are incurred by the person, the person's family, and/or society in obtaining these skills. Even first language acquisition by children requires time inputs by adults for language skills to be developed. Even if the child's time has little economic value, the value of the time of the parents or caregivers may be substantial. This is the investment dimension of language capital.

(3) It is productive. It is hypothesized that language skills enhance productivity in the labour market (e.g., higher levels of earnings, employment and occupational status), and this has been confirmed in several statistical analyses. It has also been hypothesized, but subject to less rigorous testing, that language skills enhance productivity in consumption activities (including quality of life) and in the degree of participation in the civic life of the country. This is the return dimension of language capital, and as with other forms of capital, returns are received over a period of time after the investment costs are incurred.

But first, what is "economics of language"? Grin, defined it as covering the study of:

...the effects of language on income (possibly revealing the presence of language-based discrimination), language learning by immigrants, patterns of language maintenance and spread in multilingual policies or between trading partners, minority language protection and promotion, the selection and design of language policies, language



use in the workplace, and market equilibrium for language-specific goods and services.

The economics of language span a wide range of issues, many of which can be approached using the concepts and methods of the economics of language. The overwhelming majority of questions studied stem from the presence of more than one language. Economists have at various times characterized language as an ethnic identity marker, an element of human capital, or both, in trying to assess the effect of individuals' linguistic attributes on their earnings. Literature on the link between language and economic activity examines language use at work, in consumption and advertising, or the effect of language variables on local economic development or the locational choice of business firms. Much of the existing work therefore studies the impact of language on economics; another strand of research, however, focuses on the reverse causation, and examines how linguistic variables are affected by economic ones. Finally, a growing body of literature addresses language planning problems; the emphasis then is often put on identifying and evaluating the costs and benefits associated with policy options.

Our overview of the economics of language shows that economic perspectives can supply useful elements in the study of language-related phenomena, and help to select and design language policies. However, the application of these instruments cannot dispense with the conceptual background or analytical perspective of other social sciences. For example, economists take language as a given, and drastically simplify notions such as "competence" or "attitudes" in order to make them amenable to deductive modelling and empirical testing; the contribution from applied linguists and sociolinguists helps to ensure an appropriate use of such variables.

### **The Circassian Language – Important Milestones**

- The first book published in Circassian was authored by Birsey Wumar, published in Tbilisi-Georgia on 14 March 1857 using Arabic letters. The 14th of March is considered as the day of the Circassian language.

- Arabic letters had been used in writing the Circassian language until 1927.
- Latin letters were used in writing the Circassian language between 1927 and 1937.
- Cyrillic has been used in writing the Circassian language since 1937, and all the national Adige literature is published in this orthography since then (about 7 million literary text so far in the Adige and Abaza languages, as estimated by the Circassian language Conference held in Ankara in 2003).
- In 1991 researcher Raya Daurova suggested to use the Circassian marks or *damigha*, which are derived from Circassian family emblems, believed to be derived from Old Circassian. The writing appears on many archaeological findings like the stone of Maikop, and is believed to be the oldest human writing, dating back to the seventh millennium BC.
- There are many attempts by linguists to replace Cyrillic with Latin orthography, and some favour Arabic orthography, which they claim is more suitable in expressing the Circassian language, as it is practically impossible to generalise the use of Cyrillic outside the Russian Federation. Opponents to this movement claim that Cyrillic orthography should remain so that the literature written in this orthography is not lost and to prevent the negation of efforts to preserve the language. Some countries, like Azerbaijan, have converted its writing to Latin in spite of these risks in its wish to disembark from the Russian cultural sphere and find pace in the globalisation movement. The experience of these countries could be reviewed for lessons to be learned.
- Most Circassians (Kabardians, Cherkess or Adigeans) in the Caucasus and in the Russian Federation in general can speak Circassian with a good fluency. They number about a million and most of them use Circassian in their daily life. They are also bilingual and use Russian as their working, cultural and business language. Younger generations also speak an international language.
- A good portion of the Circassians in Turkey speak Circassian in reasonable fluency, and these number about a million. Most of the speakers of Circassian in Turkey, though, do not use it in their

daily life which makes it difficult for them to pass the language over to younger generations.

- A small portion of Circassians in Jordan and Syria speak Circassian on a daily or semi-daily basis, and even fewer use it at the social level.
- Most of the Circassians in Israel speak Circassian as a family or social language, but also use Hebrew and Arabic for business and education.
- A small portion of Circassians in Western Europe (about 40-50 thousand) speak Circassian in the way they have learned it in their original countries, but find it difficult to pass it over to the younger generation.
- Although all Circassians share the same origin and cause, each group living in a different country has its own conditions, and consequently has different culture, habits and aspirations in social and political life, and they share with their countrymen many qualities, interests and commitments. And in case a conflict of interest arises between two countries, Circassians find themselves allied with the citizens of their adopted countries in the issues at stake.
- The attitudes of each Circassian country group towards the policies of their countries as concerns linguistic and political rights vary in accordance to the linguistic and minority policies adopted by each country.
- Many of the country constitutions and laws determine the attitude towards the official and minority languages. Some countries prohibit or do not encourage the use of ethnic languages and their development and take active steps to limit their use and spread.
- Many ethnic minorities are worried about the extinction of their languages and their attitude towards their language's conservation is dictated by their stand in respect to the general policies of their countries. Language is viewed here as part of the system of values which they struggle to preserve. This may sometimes run contrary to their country's official policies.

### **What unites the Circassians all over the world?**

- They speak the Circassian language as a means of communication between citizens of more than one country.
- They believe in a common origin and they adore their ancestral homeland, without this in anyway affecting their loyalty to their countries of residence.
- They share some common characteristics, which are generally admired by their fellow countrymen, like honesty.
- Their belief in the civilised role they can play in laying the bases of international peace and co-operation. As dictated by the complexity of their situation and life in many countries, they tend to take mediating stands in the issues facing their societies.
- Their belief in the human being and his role and mission in environmental and natural resource conservation, and the conservation of their culture which they view as part of international human heritage.
- The concentration on the positive role of man and the avoidance of conflicting issues and the narrow interests of states.
- The presence of an international Circassian movement does not conflict with the aspirations of their fellow countrymen, or with the policies of their respective states and their policies and programmes for the development of their countries and peoples. This interest of the Circassians will only give fruit if an integrated view is considered with a special emphasis on developing the Circassian language and etiquette (Adige Xabze) as part of the shared heritage of mankind. It can be said that the Circassians are living in an era of developed organisational structure which they never had before at this level, and they have institutions which are capable of dealing with international issues, where the conservation and development of their native language gain priority above other issues. In addition, they are capable of implementing programmes for the dissemination and development of their language at a professional level.

## **Circassian websites on the Internet**

- Official websites of states, republics, administrations and universities.
- Websites of associations and clubs in different countries.
- Personal, community and village websites.
- There are 500-700 Circassian websites, many of them established by amateurs and some could be tied with interest circles of some countries, which may wish to employ the Circassians in their policies. Worldwide, there are more than 500 million sites.
- There is a qualitative development in search engine and keyword selection to search for subjects related to the Circassians.
- The multiplicity of languages used in searching and navigation on the Internet, such as English, French, Russian, Arabic and Turkish, makes it difficult to navigate and limit the benefits, as these languages do not share common translation protocols.

## **Levels of Circassian Courses**

The Adigebeze courses subject to an international programme, such as AZa, can be arranged in five levels:

- Level 1 - Basic level: allows the individual to exchange greetings and to understand the structure of the language.
- Level 2 – Preliminary level: enables the individual to talk about simple needs and general subjects.
- Level 3 – Medium level: enables the individual to talk about current and general subjects with a reasonable fluency.
- Level 4 – Advanced level: enables the individual to exchange ideas on literary topics and world affairs.
- Level 5 – Professional level: enables the individual to produce journalistic, literary, scientific and research texts and verbal communication.

### **The AZa Programme: Let's Learn Circassian (Adigebe Zedivghasch'e)**

The programme is based on an interactive approach using the widely available resources of multimedia and the internet aiming at teaching the Circassian language to participants of the programme and at the same time providing these participants with financial, economic and educational benefits.

The participant will automatically become a shareholder in the AZa Company by buying one of the five levels of the Adigebe course, and in-turn he/she will benefit from the financial turn-over of the company's activities in education, multimedia production and other enterprises. It was envisaged at the beginning to use the pyramid method, where each participant invites three other participants to join the programme and receive a share of their paid contributions, and as the system goes on, the one at the top of the pyramid will become eligible to receive a share from all the participants below him in the pyramid. This method works only to some extent, but would fail to be sustained, as liabilities of the system would soon exceed its generated benefits.

The alternative to this is the following: Each participant at the beginning of the programme will be asked to be a head of a tribe (*lhepq nex'izch*) and attract a number of heads of sub-tribes (*qwdame nex'izch*), and these to attract a number of heads of families (*winaghwe nex'izch*), and each family head to attract a number of family members (*ts'ixw zaqwe*). As in the case of normal tribes and families, each head will naturally be responsible for the welfare and prosperity of his subordinates. All communication and correspondence between the AZa community will be done in Adigebe, and the system will be open not only to native Circassians, but to virtually anyone who is interested in this tongue, and of course in improving his or her life conditions.

### **Potential economic benefits of the AZa programme**

The programme or the company which will initiate it will benefit from the contributions of its increased numbers, which may reach thousands or even tens or hundreds of thousands, in the formation of a significant financial capital, which it may employ in the following fields:

- The design and operation of a Circassian search engine in many languages, including Circassian.
- Scholarships to outstanding students to study at top international universities and institutions.
- Preparation of Circassian teaching programmes and their dissemination on a large scale.
- The establishment of the Circassian Interactive University, which would offer scientific diplomas through interactive and remote learning.
- Encourage Circassian youth to indulge in scientific research and aim at acquiring international awards and prizes like the Nobel Prize.
- Encourage and support international efforts to lay international peace, democracy and human rights.
- Establishment of an international journalism company which will own newspapers, radio and television stations.
- Establishment of a cinema and TV production company that would deal with Circassian heritage, history and culture.
- Establishment of a Circassian satellite company (Satanay) which will be the first interactive scientific satellite.
- Management of the company's assets and investments.
- Management of the company's contributors' records and accounts.

### **Potential jobs generated from the AZa programme**

The following job opportunities could be generated from the general effort to conserve, improve and widen the use of the Circassian language and from the AZa programme in specific:

- Jobs in linguistic research: academic and support positions in developing dictionaries, grammar books, course books, audio-visuals materials and interactive teaching media.
- Jobs in teaching: at Circassian schools and language centres.
- Jobs in journalism and creative literature.
- Jobs in multimedia and audio-visual production: in TV, radio stations, websites, printed media, music and art.

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## Recommendations for Maintenance of the Circassian Language in Jordan

The following steps can be taken (or are recommended by the International Centre for Circassian Studies in co-ordination and co-operation with the Circassian Charity Association in Jordan) to upgrade the status of Circassian in Jordan in the short- and medium-term and enhance its prestige, in addition to boosting and extending the gamut of Circassian language usage. Some of these measures are immediately implementable with minimal effort and cost. Others are more involved and medium-term, but still they can be done if the will to action is obtained and the requisite resources are made available. Systematic and sober implementation of these measures should give a considerable boost to the status and prestige of Circassian and promote its use amongst both the old and young.

The Circassian Charity Association (CCA) can play a leading role in effecting a linguistic and cultural revival since it runs the Prince Hamza School, which has a core centre of children who enjoy some knowledge of the Circassian language and where already there are mechanisms on the ground for teaching the Circassian language. Concerted efforts by concerned parties would upgrade the status of Circassian in the School and improve the levels of competence that could be attained by the students. Dr. Ülle Rannut's work (2007) on the Circassian language situation in the School and how to boost the status of the language, *Minority Language Policy in the Middle East: Circassian Language Maintenance in Jordan*, should be designated and assigned as the blueprint for effecting these transformations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Ülle Rannut is a well-known international language policy researcher and authority on the promotion of minority languages at the Institute of Estonian Language and Culture, Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia. She conducted research in Jordan on the status of Circassian and produced the said report and

It is fortunate that there are no restriction whatsoever on the use of the Circassian language by the Circassians in the cultural and literary spheres in Jordan. therefore, the only challenges facing the Circassian community in this regard is the will to action and the technical know-how to effect the required measures and bring into action viable mechanisms for language maintenance and development.

### **1. Promote the use of the Circassian language:**

- a. Use (attractive) signs and plates (for doors and gateways) in Circassian (besides other languages) at all Circassian institutions in Jordan. This ‘symbolic’ step could be supported and sponsored by the Circassian Charity Association (CCA) in co-ordination and co-operation of the other Circassian institutions (Prince Hamza School, Al-Ahli Club, Al-Jeel Club, Circassian kitchen, etc.). Symbolism is very essential and powerful in such an endeavour. The implementation of this measure could be construed as the inauguration of a new phase of concern and consideration for the mother tongue.
- b. Establish a language centre that both prepares materials in Circassian on the Circassian language and provides instruction in the language on a wide scale for both children and adults. Initially, instructors could be employed from the Circassian language staff at Prince Hamza School. Later, the graduates of universities in the Caucasus (sent on scholarships) could gradually take over these tasks.
- c. Provide the students at Prince Hamza School with adequate, even handsomely produced text-books and

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published an article ‘Circassian Language Maintenance in Jordan’ in an international journal.

language materials. This entails the selection, printing and distribution of these books. Support from the Ministry of Education in Jordan could be solicited in this regard.

- d. Perhaps thought should be given to establish bilingual media outlets in Circassian and other languages as a long-term goal. A bilingual newspaper and radio station are possible with enough resources. Bilingual publication of the Nart Magazine is however possible as an immediate measure.
- e. Set up a traditional Circassian guest-house (*hesch'sch*; хьэщIэщ) at the Circassian Charity Association (CCA), whereby 'traditional minstrels' (джэгукIуэ; *jegwak'we*) can display their wares (proverbs and sayings, toasts, stories, songs, the tenets of Circassian customs and traditions, etc.). Each night a theme is broached and people are encouraged to attend and take part. Talented people could be persuaded to act as minstrels.
- f. Spread awareness about the importance of learning and teaching Circassian amongst parents and students using multiple methods (flyers, lectures, electronically, at school, etc.). The time to start to teach children Circassian is upon birth. A child could easily learn more than one language (three are possible) as a mother tongue. The limitation in this regard is purely on the part of parents, not the children.

## **2. Make it pay to know Circassian:**

- a. Make it a policy to hire people in Circassian institutions that speak and write Circassian. For example, the CCA could employ a person proficient in Circassian to make Circassian copies of CCA correspondences, make a Circassian version of the CCA website, translate some articles in Nart Magazine into Circassian so that the

magazine could eventually turn into a bilingual publication, etc. In addition, the menu of the Circassian kitchen –Samovar – could also be provided in Circassian, etc.

- b. Establish 2-3 scholarships a year for students (competent graduates of Prince Hamza School) to study Circassian language and literature at universities in the Caucasus (Nalchik and Maikop). The graduates would be guaranteed good work at the CCA or School. They could be provided posts as school lecturers and cultural workers. This group of specialists in the Circassian language and literature could Potentially effect a transformation in the fortune of the Circassian language in Jordan.
- c. Make Circassian a principal and compulsory subject in Prince Hamza School. This might need co-ordination with the Ministry of Education in Jordan. Also, provide instruction in selected subjects in Circassian, i.e. teach the topics in Circassian. Don't leave Circassian as just another subject to be learnt.

### **3. The Caucasian connection:**

- a. Strong and productive Connections should be fostered with educational and cultural institutions in the Caucasus (ministries of education, ministries of culture, universities and colleges, cultural institutions, etc.). Books published in the Caucasus could be marketed in Jordan to upgrade the status of Circassian and boost literacy in Circassian. Working visits by linguists and culturalists from the Caucasus should be encouraged to provide consultations on how to develop and disseminate the language and to give lectures on the Circassian language. This would send out a strong signal to the Circassian community in Jordan of the importance of Circassian.

- b. The Circassian republics have considerable linguistic and cultural resources (books, text-books, media materials, etc.) that could be utilized. If the people in the Caucasus feel the diaspora's interest in the Circassian language and culture, this would feed positively into increased general interest in them in the homeland. Ultimately, the corrosion of language and culture in the homeland, should it happen, would be much more serious than their loss in the diaspora, this being said without detracting from the gravity of the situation in the diaspora.

#### **4. The political dimension:**

Although some people might want to keep away from any issue that might have political connotations, language survival is ultimately a political matter. There is only so much that the Circassian community can do on its own to stem the tide of assimilation and loss of language and culture. Official institutional support is most crucial in this regard, and it has to be solicited without causing undue consternation. Shying away from this task is not an option.

- a. Although the Circassians are not considered a minority in Jordan, but are full members of society with equal rights and responsibilities as other citizens of Jordan, special consideration should be given by the government to Circassian issues that are connected with language and culture. A case could be developed to petition the Jordanian government to provide support and sponsorship for the Circassian language and culture. The Circassian language should be viewed as one of the important cultural manifestations in Jordan that warrant conservation. The cultural heritage of the Circassians should be promoted as an integral part of Jordanian culture. Diversity and variety enrich the cultural texture in Jordan.

- b. The figureheads of the Circassian community (current and ex-ministers, members of parliament, senators, high-ranking officials, ambassadors, industrialists, etc.) should be made aware of this effort and kept up-to-date of its developments. Their suggestions and support are indispensable to the success of this endeavour. The championing of Circassian causes associated with language and culture at the official level should not be viewed with trepidation. This should send out a signal that the Circassians respect and appreciate their heritage, and are not ashamed of it.

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international legal documents, nor has there been research which would provide basis for requesting governmental support and plan further steps for language revitalisation.]

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## Present State of Circassian Language and Culture in Cyber Space

- Materials in Circassian (as opposed to materials on the Circassians in all languages) available on the web are puny in both size and content. Very few portals (websites) provide Circassian materials in a systematic way, namely the organs (newspapers) of the Kabardino-Balkarian and Adigean parliaments and governments and a couple of official portals. To put this in perspective, and conservatively assuming that there are a few tens of billions of websites in the English language, there are about 10,000,000,000 sites in English for each site in the Circassian language!
- There is a couple of proselytizing (religious) sites that disseminate information in (excellent) Circassian.
- To demonstrate the paucity of Circassian materials in cyberspace, a number of Google searches (in the 'all languages' configuration) of Circassian seminal cultural words shall be conducted: 'хабзэ' ('Circassian customs and traditions') [6,970 hits (this is the nominal count; the actual count is much less than this), almost all in Russian], 'адыгагъэ' ('Circassian ethics') [1,350 hits (nominal count), almost all in Russian], 'джэгуакIуэ' ('Circassian bard') [295 actual hits, almost all in Russian], 'пшыналъэ' ('melody', or 'song') [120 actual hits, mostly in Russian], 'джэгу' ('dance ceremony/party') [3,280 hits (nominal count), almost all in Russian]. The Circassian cyber writers (in Circassia) use Russian almost exclusively, even when they write about Circassian culture and folklore.
- National libraries in the Circassian republics do not have dedicated websites. [Most other republics in the Russian Federation have established good websites for their national libraries.](#)
- It is possible to make all seminal works on Circassian culture and folklore available online. The site [Circassian Online Library](#) is the pioneer in this area. The seminal portal [Mass Information Media in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic](#) is also a substantive resource for online books ([10 books in Kabardian](#)) and

[newspapers](#). However, this good work should be continued and emulated by other Circassian cultural sites. This would substantially increase Circassian language presence in cyber space.

- The substantive and very informative site of the President of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic (in Russian and English) is obviously run by a dedicated team of technical and language experts. Including an expert in the Circassian language to render the information into Circassian doesn't seem like a difficult task. His Excellency the President should set an example to other officials across Circassia by upgrading the status of Circassian, starting with his own website. Next, a portal wholly dedicated to Circassian language and culture must be sanctioned by the President and established as a beacon for Circassians across the world. The President's advisers should become more aware of Circassian issues and counsel the President to render more attention to the demands of the Circassians with regard to their language and culture. The President's website includes a facility to contact the President, so Circassian activists who are concerned about Circassian language and culture can relay their concerns directly to the President. Perhaps a culture of positive activism could be fostered among the Circassians.
- There is no dedicated website for the Ministry of Culture and Information Communication of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic. No comment is needed!
- 'Masters' of the Circassian language – those who can write it in its full glory and wield it at will – are an esoteric group consisting of the graduates of the language and literature faculties of universities in Circassia. The same 'esoteric' argument can be levelled at cultural workers in Circassia. Presently, these are the custodians of the Circassian language and culture.
- The cyber space in Circassia (and, of course, all over Russia) is totally controlled by the government. By limiting publication in Circassian (in the media, press, and cyber space) the authorities severely restrict manifestations of Circassian culture and nationalism. It is more difficult to control words in Circassian since the Russians (in Circassia) are in general not conversant with Circassian.

- Despite their numerical minority, the Circassians in the Republic of Adigea are working extremely hard to preserve their language and culture. However, it seems that the battle against assimilation (to Russian language and culture) is being gradually lost (according to some studies). Mass return of the Circassian diaspora to Adigea (and the rest of Circassia) is absolutely essential if the language and culture (and indeed the ethnos itself) are to be preserved. The Adigean authorities must create the necessary conditions to accommodate those in the diaspora who wish to return to their ancestral lands and to provide the needed facilities to make their lives feasible in the Republic. The return of the Kosovar Circassians in 1998 should have been an opportunity to the Adigean authorities to demonstrate their capability of dealing with the diaspora issue, but it seems that they were unable to set a good example for the other diaspora Circassians. The Russians (and indeed the Adigeans themselves) should realize that Circassia belongs to the Circassians everywhere and that they have a sacred right to their land. Despite many demands to ease the repatriation process, nothing substantive has been done.
- If you thought the situation was bad in Kabarda and Adigea, it gets even worse in Cherkessia (the Circassian part of the Karachai-Cherkess Republic). Fortunately, the Cherkess get linguistic and cultural succour from their Kabardian brethren across the border. Of course, the Cherkess also make substantive contributions to Circassian culture (relative to their population size – about 100,000). The Shapsugh fare worst in terms of linguistic and cultural manifestations on the www. Without integration of the Shapsugh Region with Adigea (a measure that is screaming to be taken), the Shapsugh can do little to maintain their language and heritage in the absence of specialized official institutions.
- There are materials on Circassian culture and other matters (in Russian) extant across Russian Internet sites. Theses and dissertations are available online, but there is no specialized portal that categorises and provides access to them.
- It is becoming increasingly obvious that the Circassian language in Circassia is being gradually and systematically eradicated from

the public spheres, despite being one of the official languages in the three Circassian republics.

- It would be safe to assume that the policy of marginalization of Circassian is sanctioned by the Russian authorities (at the highest level) and is implemented by the local Circassian officials, who seem not to be worried in the least about their native language and culture and their future.
- Ultimately, the future of the Circassian language is a political matter. Without a political decision at the highest level in the Circassian republics to make Circassian the first language in the educational and public spheres, the status of Circassian will remain inferior to that of Russian. It might not be obvious to the Circassians in the Caucasus, but on the global scale Russian is a provincial language that is of no great consequence in cyber space. The isolation of the Circassians in the Russian sphere is distorting their views of the world and their position and that of their culture in it.
- It is quite ironic that the concerned authorities in Circassia took part in the First International Circassian Language Conference on the future of the Circassian language in the diaspora in Amman in the period 15-16 October 2008, organized by the Circassian Benevolent Association of Jordan and the Russian Centre for Culture and Science in Amman. According to the organisers of the Conference, 'The gathering has one major mission: to make sure that this language [language] will not die among its children in the diaspora'. The process should also be applied in Circassia to reverse the policies discriminating against the Circassian language and restore it to pre-eminence. Clear methods and means are well tried and tested: make Circassian the principal language of education (including at the university level) and officialdom (including all spheres of public life), reduce the status of Russian to a secondary language, and introduce more useful languages, such as English and French. This would also reduce the global isolation of the Circassians in the Caucasus, whose universe is limited within the boundaries of Russia.
- It would be inconceivable for the authorities to acquiesce to such demands for Circassian language resurgence in the absence of duress. Therefore, the only way of safeguarding Circassian

language and culture is by actively lobbying and pressuring the parliaments and governments in Circassia to legislate and take action in their favour.

- The refreshing phenomena of Adiga Radio and Nart TV in Israel and Jordan, respectively, should be viewed as examples to be emulated by the authorities in Circassia. If the Circassians in the diaspora, with their limited resources, could establish radio and TV stations that broadcast in Circassian, then there is no excuse for a number of such stations not to be set up in Circassia.
- Although the comments and notes concern the cyber space in Circassia, portals and websites in the diaspora should endeavour to feature more Circassian materials in Circassian. There is only a couple of portals that systematically publish in Circassian in the diaspora. There is only one dedicated online Circassian journal ([\*The Hearth Tree: Circassian Cultural Miscellany\*](#), published by the International Centre for Circassian Studies). Those literate in Circassian should lend a hand and render cyber information into Circassian. Circassian culture without Circassian language is like man without oxygen.
- Having roughly diagnosed the problem, it would be worth investigating what could be done to bolster the presence of the Circassian language in cyber space (a loud signal of the importance of Circassian culture).

## АДЫГЭ ЛИТЕРАТУРЭМРЭ ТЕАТРЫМРЭ

### Circassian Literature and Theatre

## АДЫГЭ ЛИТЕРАТУРЭ: ХЭЗЫГЪЭГЪУАЗЭ

### Circassian Literature: An Introductory Account

ORATORY had been a well-developed art in Circassia since time immemorial. Foster-boys were instructed in rhetoric from an early age, and many graduates went on to become past masters in this art. The word *Adigebze* [адыгэбзэ], Circassian language, acquired a specialized sense of a nice and serious speech. Toasts have maintained their role as important components of oral literature, besides their religious significance. These literary genres went through adverse circumstances starting from the end of the 18th century, but started to recover by the end of the 19th.

Western travellers and scholars have provided conflicting accounts as to the level of development of Circassian literature. According to the German scholar, F. Bodenstedt, who visited the Caucasus in the first half of the 19th century, for the Circassian, ‘Poetry is both a repository of national wisdom and sagacity, a guide to noble action, and the ultimate arbiter ... It is the moralizer and the preventer of evil deeds.’<sup>3</sup> Paul B. Henze wrote, ‘Circassians had a rich tradition of oral poetry. Oratory

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<sup>3</sup> Bodenstedt, F., *Die Völker des Kaukasus und ihre freiheitskämpfe gegen die Russen: Ein Beitrag zur neuesten Geschichte des Orients*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Verlag Lizius, 1849 (second edition); reworked in 2 vols, 1855.

— *Les peuples du Caucase et leur guerre d’indépendance contre la Russie*, Paris, 1859.

was a highly developed art. Leaders gained as much renown for their speechmaking ability as for their skill in battle' (P. Henze, 1992, p71). On the other hand, W. E. Curtis, who toured the Caucasus early in the 20th century, claimed that the Circassians had no literature, but 'their poets have written many charming lines and there are two or three local histories of merit' (1911, p255). His account of the Circassians was patronizing, to say the least, and dismissed literary traditions that stretched back for hundreds of years.

It had been the official view during the Soviet period, that the Circassians had no literature whatsoever before establishment of Soviet power. The conception, birth and perfect development of Circassian literature took place under the guiding hand of the Russian 'Big Brother.' Communist ideology did not allow leeway for ideas that are incompatible with it. The procession of writers that started to emerge almost a century before were a source of embarrassment, and they were plain ignored or mentioned in passing when inevitable.

Soviet-era Adiga writers propagated this myth. In the foreword to his collection of poems *Starlit Hours*, Alim Keshokov (Ch'ischoqwe) wrote that 'more important still is the temporal factor, the fact that the conception and the entire development of Kabardian literature, of which this book is a part, has occurred within the last fifty years (1981, p15).

For all his literary genius, Keshokov had done Adiga literature great injustice. He went further and almost demanded leniency of the Western reader on account of the 'youth' of the literary tradition to which his works belonged. There was also a trace of want of confidence. But it was also a case of a writer toeing Party line, aware that literary suffocation, and even liquidation, would be the lot of nay-sayers. Another giant, Khachim Теунов (Теунэ Хьэчим; Teiwine Hechiym), dedicated a whole volume, having the eerie title *The New Flood*, to this theme in 1952.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, as will be shown later, Circassian literature was written well before communist times, and certainly had attained a high level of

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<sup>4</sup> Teunov (Teiwine), Kh., *Novi potok* [The New Flood], Moscow: Sovetski pisatel, 1952.



development long before the Russians made their presence felt in the 16th century. It had been preserved in national memory thanks to the roving minstrels. Some extant tales go back almost 1,500 years, to the time of early Christianity in the Caucasus. In 1860, V. Kusikov published *On the Poetry of the Circassians* in Stavropol. In 1924, a collection of Adigean literary material was published in Moscow. By 1929, a work on the history of Kabardian literature had already been published by Chamozokov.

Oral tradition consists of thousands of tales and stories that take up almost every theme in the life of ancient Circassians. There are accounts of the origins of the Adiga nation, the peoples with whom they established contacts, heroes and anti-heroes, historical events and so on.

When literature was formalized in the Soviet period, writers had a very rich tradition to fall back upon, and many mature works were produced early on. In fact, they can be regarded as a continuation of the old institution. Despite the limitations imposed by ideology and the narrow scope of permissible themes, classic works were penned that have kept their value to this day.

### **The Nart Epos**

The corpus of the Nart Sagas is arguably the most essential ingredient of Circassian culture. It is as important to the Circassian ethos as Greek mythology is to Western Civilization. In fact, NW Caucasians and Greeks on the Eastern Shore of the Black Sea co-existed for more than a thousand years, during which some cultural exchanges must have taken place. This would explain similarities in some of their mythical tales.

Though much less known than their Greek counterparts, the Nart epic tales are no less developed. The heroism, sagacity, guile and oftentimes naked brutality of the Nart heroes and demi-gods are more than matches to those of the Greek Pantheon. In the first stanza of the 'Song of the Narts,' the double-edged sword is likened to a rabid dog, a graphic illustration of unbridled ferocity:

My great sabre is as fearsome as a crazed hound,  
Streaming crimson blood down its twosome fangs.

Си джатэжурэ, уой дуней, хьэщхьэрылуэдзэ,  
И дзэпкьитымыкIэ, уой, лъыр йожэхри.

The age of the Epos can be inferred indirectly from the themes broached. In the episode ‘Sosriqwe Maƒ’e Qeih’ («СОСРЫКЪУЭ МАФІЭ КЪЕХЪ»; ‘Sosriqwe Fetches Fire’) the hero of the tale takes council with his steed Tx’wezchey (Тхъуэжьей; literally: Little Dun). This takes us back to the times when animals were thought to have human-like characteristics:

— Мырмэ, си Тхъуэжьей ажэ, Жэрхэри зыщIэмыхьэж.	— ‘My Tx’wezchey, The fleetest of them all.
Мыр Инмэ и унэщ, И щхьэ-и лъэ зэгъэкьуащ.	This is the Giant’s mound, His feet are tucked under his head.
МафIэр и кум илгыжщ, Уэ, Инри мэжей.	The fire is in the middle, And the Ogre is asleep.
Уэ, си Тхъуэжьей ажэ, МафIэр сыткIи фIэтхьын? — жи.	Now, my fleet Tx’wezchey, Tell me, pray, how to steal a brand?’
— Армэ, СосрыкьуапцIэ, Армэ, лIы фIыцIэ гьущIынэ.	— ‘Swarthy Sosriqwe, The iron-eyed darksome man.
Мыдэ, емьинэ шу, Сэ си щIыб къэшэс.	Most dashing horseman, Ride on my back.
Сэ си шы лъэ макъым Хьэ лъэ макъ зезгъэщIынщ.	I shall turn the clatter of my hooves Into the tamer tread of a hound.
Сэ си хьэ лъэ макъым Джэду лъэ макъ зезгъэщIынщ.	[As we draw nearer,] my hound footsteps I shall make as soft as a feline’s.
Хьэлъэ-фIалъэ зизгъэуэнщи, Зы пхьэ дзакIи къэддыгьунщ.	We shall sneak up And snatch a fire-brand.’

Sergei V. Rjabchikov traces a record of this legend to the third century BC on the Maikop Slab.<sup>5</sup> According to Yuri Libedinsky, the Epos dates

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<sup>5</sup> Sergei V. Rjabchikov, 'The Scythians, Sarmatians, Meotians, Russians and Circassians: Interpretation of the Ancient Cultures', in *The Slavonic Antiquity*, 1999, <<http://public.kubsu.ru/~usr02898/sl2.htm>>. 'It is known that the Circassian hero (*nart*) *Sosruko* (*Sausryk''u*) was connected with the solar myths (Kaloev, B. A., Mizhaev, M. I., and Salakaya, S. H., 'Narty [The Narts]', in: S. A. Tokarev (ed.) *Mify narodov mira*, vol. 2, Moscow: Sovetskaya Ėntsiklopediya, pp 199-201, 1992, p200). He returned the fire to other heroes as well (Mizhaev, M. I., 'Sosruko [Nart Sosriqwe]', in: S. A. Tokarev (ed.) *Mify narodov mira*, vol. 2, Moscow: Sovetskaya Ėntsiklopediya, 1992, p464). The following record – *Mafa narata Sushe-riko* – is written down on the [Meotian=ancient Circassian] Maikop slab (the 3rd c. B.C.) with the help of the signs of the Linear B (Linear A) (Sergei V. Rjabchikov, *Drevnie texty slavyan i adygov* [Ancient Texts of the Slavs and Circassians], Krasnodar: Torgovo-promyshlennaya palata Krasnodarskogo kraja, 1998, p23). The text means 'The fire (day) of the hero (by the name) Dryness/Sun-King'. Here the name *Sushe-riko* (*Sosruko*, *Sausryk''u*) consists of the word *sushe* (cf. Russian *sush'* 'dry place', *suhoy* 'dry' and Old Indian *surya* 'the sun') and of the word *riko* (cf. Latin *rex*, Etruscan *luc-*, Old Indian *rajan* 'king', German *Reich* 'state', and even Polynesian *ariki* 'chief'). I think that *Sushe-[riko]* is a variant of the name of the Indo-Aryan god *Surya* 'The Sun' who is represented as the eye of the deities *Mitra*, *Varuna*, and *Agni*; sometimes this god is equal to *Savitara*. Interestingly, the fragment of a Tmutarakan' amphora contains the word *sush* 'dryness' and the picture of an eye (Sergei V. Rjabchikov, *Tainstvennaya Tmutarakan'*, Krasnodar: Torgovo-promyshlennaya palata Krasnodarskogo kraja, 1998, pp 22-3). On the other hand, the inhabitants of the ancient Russian town Tmutarakan' worshipped, by hypothesis, the god *Hors*. The name of [Tmutarakan'](#) (cf. Russian *t'ma* 'darkness, gloom' and *tarashchit* (*glaza*) 'to goggle') may be a symbol of the death and resurrection of the Egyptian/Scythian deities *Horus* and *Osiris*. In the Abkhazian mythology *Hudysh* is connected with *Sasrykva* (the Abkhazian variant of Circassian *Sosruko*). Alternatively, according to the Indo-Aryan mythology, *Surya* competed with *Etasha*. The names *Hudysh* and *Etasha* are similar. Several features of the hero *Sosruko* are preserved in the Russian fairytale character *Koshchei Bessmertny*. In the Circassian mythology there are *Thozhey* [*Tx'wezchey*], the horse of the hero *Sosruko*, and his enemy, the old woman *Uorsar* [*Werser*] (Mizhaev, 1992). I read the name *Thozhey* as *T hozhey* 'This is a fast (horse) or the sun', cf. Russian *hod* 'motion; movement', German *heiß* 'hot',

back to the period between the 12th and eighth centuries BC.<sup>6</sup> In the 1950s, celebrations were held in the North Caucasus commemorating the millennium of the birth of the legends. The former hypothesis seems more probable because it allows possibility of interaction between Greek and North Caucasian civilizations. If there is truth in the hypothesis that the *Chints* (ЧЫНТ) of the Nart era were none other than the historical Sinds, then the older date must be correct. In addition, dating the age of heroism and formation of the core Circassian culture to the great historical lacuna causes discomfort.

The legends of the Narts had been transmitted orally by storytellers who acted as guardians of national mythology. Although these tales are undoubtedly of ancient origin, their language underwent some lexical changes that reflected the introduction of new technology and loan words. For example, the adoption of the musket by the Circassians incorporated it retroactively as one of the weapons of the Narts. In addition, the original significance of some terms has been lost. There might have also been some changes in the contents of the stories, perhaps to suit the purposes and styles of the storytellers. The existence of different and sometimes divergent versions gives credence to this view.

There is an ongoing dispute as to the true originators of the epic. The contention is between Ossetic and North Caucasian origins. Dumézil's verdict went in favour of an Indo-European descent, which was hotly contested by Adiga scholars, such as Asker Hedeghel'e. Even if a non-Caucasian origin were proved, the value of the Sagas would not be diminished in the least. As time went by, North Caucasian variants assumed a local character as they absorbed the customs and mores of the indigenes, and became a depository of their literary treasures.

Some students and scholars of Celtic culture are paying more attention to the Nart Epos as a possible connection to the Arthurian and Holy Grail

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English *hot*, *heat*. The name *Uorsar* (Werser) can be divided into the two words, *Uor sar*, cf. Russian *vor zari* 'thief of the dawn'.

<sup>6</sup> In preface to *Narti: Kabardinski èpos* [The Narts: A Kabardian Epos], Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1951, pp 8-18.

legends is perceived.<sup>7</sup> The presence of a Sarmatian legion in the Roman army in the British Isles gives credence to this hypothesis. The Iranian-speaking Sarmatians might have picked up a portion of tales during their sojourn in the North Caucasus and then spread it in Celtic Britain. The tests of strength and worthiness of two of the heroes in the two epics are similar. Sosriqwe (Сосрыкъуэ) used to sneak to *Lhepsch*'s (Лъэпщ) smithy to try to lift the anvil, which was rooted down to the seventh layer of earth—a prerequisite feat for joining the council of the elders. Arthur, on the other hand, had to pull a sword, Excalibur, from a stone anchored by an anvil to prove his claim to sovereignty.

Both epics encapsulated the codes of chivalry of the Circassians and Medieval Europeans. Non-Celts, especially the French, whole-heartedly embraced the Arthurian legends, which gradually lost their purely Celtic character as they absorbed the knightly mores of the Continentals.

#### **Collection of the Nart tales<sup>8</sup>**

The tales, which are of various lengths, have come down to us in prose and verse. The first serious attempt at collecting these tales was made by Shora Negwme (Нэргумэ Шорэ; Nogmov) in the first half of the 19th

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<sup>7</sup> See for example:

Arbuthnot, N., *A Re-evaluation of the Proposed Connection between the Nart Sagas and the Arthurian Legends*, MA Thesis in Cultural Anthropology, McMaster University, Toronto, British Columbia, Canada, 1988.

Littleton, C. S., 'The Holy Grail, the Cauldron of Annwn, and the Narty-Amonga, a Further Note on the Sarmatian Connection', in *Journal of American Folklore*, 92, 1979, pp 326-33.

Littleton, C. S. and Thomas, A. C., 'The Sarmatian Connection: New Light on the Origin of the Arthurian and Holy Grail Legends', in *Journal of American Folklore*, 91, 1978, pp 513-27.

<sup>8</sup> There is a comprehensive bibliography of works on Circassian mythology published in the 19th and early 20th centuries in A. I. Alieva and A. M. Gutova, *Fol'klor adigov v zapisyakh i publikatsiyakh XIX—nachala XX v* [The Folklore of the Circassians in the Records and Publications in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries], Nalchik: The Kabardino-Balkarian Science and Research Institute of History, Philology and Economics, 1979, pp 398-402.

century.<sup>9</sup> Sulht'an Khan-Girey, the famous Circassian scholar, published a series of stories from the Epos starting in 1841 in the *Russian Herald*, and later in 1846 in the newspaper *Kavkaz*. Kazi Atazhukin, a native Kabardian, published a collection of Nart tales in 1864 in Tiflis. Pagwe Tambiy (Tambiev) (1825-1891) collaborated with L. G. Lopatinsky in collecting and studying some tales. His collections of texts, proverbs, songs, and legends were published posthumously. Qazi Hetix'wschoqwe (1841-1899) also produced some fine works. Recently there has been a more systematic process of collection and publication by Circassian scholars who are cognizant of the role that these might play in effecting cultural renaissance. In addition, the orally transmitted music has been written down. Not only sources in the Caucasus were tapped, but also the considerable oral traditions preserved by the diaspora Circassians were drawn upon.

One of the most important 20th century scholars of the Nart Sagas is Ziramikw Qardenghwsch'. Born in 1918 in Kabarda, he embarked on collecting many tales and published a number of monumental works, thus rendering his native literature a great service. In addition, he recorded many Nart anthems and he is considered a latter-day bard. The seven volumes of *The Narts: Circassian Epos* compiled by Hedeghel'e, make the largest published work on the subject. Western scholars, such as the late Georges Dumézil and, more recently, John Colarusso, did

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<sup>9</sup> Nogmov, Sh. B., *Istoriya adikheiskogo [adigeiskogo] naroda* [History of the Circassian Nation], Tiflis (Tbilisi): Kavkazki kalendar [Caucasian Calendar], 1861; republished: Nalchik, 1947; Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarian Book Press, 1958 (in Circassian and Russian); Nalchik: Elbrus Book Press, 1982, 1994. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.circassianlibrary.org/library.php?lang=en&mn=2&sbmn=1>> (accessed 1 January 2009); Online. Available HTTP: <<http://nogmov.kbsu.ru/>> (accessed 1 January 2009). [Compiled in accordance with the legends and oral traditions of the Kabardians]  
 — *Geschichte des Adygejischen Volkes. Die Sagen und Lieder des Tscherkessen-völks*, translated by A. Bergé, Leipzig, 1866.  
 — *АДЫГЭ НАРОДЫМ И ТХЫДЭ. Adige Narodim yi Txide* [History of the Adigey People], Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarian Book Press, 1958.

much research on the subject and have published many tomes on it. However, more work still needs to be done in this regard.



Asker Hedeghel'e is an iconic researcher and folklorist.

It is markworthy that after World War II the Circassian and Ossetic versions of the Epos were withdrawn for some time for 'treatment' and removal of 'elements of an ideology foreign to the people.' (V. Astemirov, 1959, p94)

### **Qualities of the Narts**

The collective qualities of the Narts were captured in the story 'We Choose to Die Young and Famous.' God sent an avian messenger to the Narts with the inquiry, 'Do you want to remain few and live short, but heroic and honourable lives, with the memory of your feats living forever and ay, or would you prefer to indulge in the pleasures of the body, multiply and live longer lives without dignity nor self-respect?' The Narts replied thus:

Ephemeral though our lives may be,  
Our names shall forever resound.

—

Without forsaking our truthful ways,  
May justice keep guiding our path!

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May we live with free and easy hearts,  
Unflattered by adversity and woe!

The principal protagonists of the Epos encapsulate the characteristics most cherished by ancient Circassians and Abkhazians. Satanay, the matriarch, was the epitome of wisdom and physical perfection. Her beauty was legendary and she was sought after by notable Narts for marriage. A lovely flower still bears her name (the drop-wort, *Filipendula*). The story of the birth of Sosriqwe bears witness to the uncontrollable effect she had on men. As she sat on her haunches doing the laundry by the river, the cow-herd, Zhemix'we, who was tending his bevy on the other side of the stream, seeing her uncovered curvaceous and calipigian limbs, was unable to hold back his semen (*nafsi*) as it was ejected across the water on the stone beside her. The stone later engendered Sosriqwe. This is the Circassian version of the Immaculate Conception, where Lady Satanay is distanced from sin.

She was also famous for her inventiveness. She discovered winemaking by planting the seeds snatched by Sosriqwe from the abode of the gods, thus giving the Narts their first taste of the elixir. It was she who discovered that plants needed water for life. The Narts turned to her for council and advice in times of national calamities, and she was able to avert many disasters that could have annihilated the Nart nation. Traditionally, North Caucasian matriarchism is considered to have reached its acme in her lifetime.

However, it is not in the nature of the tales to depict perfect characters, and despite the fantasticism, some measure of realism was injected by the originators and propagators in terms of emphasizing the dual nature of the protagonists. Satanay practised witchcraft and was the archetypal black magic woman. Although she was more associated with white magic, she invoked the black variety and its cunning to save her pet son Sosriqwe many times from certain death. She could also be as bitchy as the next vixen, as her acerbic invective against Lhepsch in the tale 'How Satanay and Lhepsch fell out with one another' so graphically illustrates.



Despite Sosriqwe's puny stature and darkish hue, he proved to be the most cunning and resourceful amongst the Narts. The story of how he fetched fire is a graphic illustration of his quick wit and wile. In some stories, he is portrayed as an anti-hero, accused of machinations against the Narts. It is mostly in Shapsugh stories that these uncomplimentary traits are lamented. Although many Narts surpassed him in physical strength and military acumen, they always held him in great esteem and respect. The fact that he led them back after fetching fire is a good testimony to that effect.

Nisrenzhach'e was the Caucasian Prometheus. Like his Greek counterpart, the Nart hero was accused of hubris and he was chained to the top of one of the twin peaks of Mount Elbrus.<sup>10</sup> The vulture kept preying on his heart, and Nisren-beard shuddered every now and then trying to throw away the shackles. The Earth trembled, his chains knocked against one other sending sparks as if from striking spears, making thunderous noises. His breath issued forth like uncontrollable gales. His heart-rending moans and groans were like rumbles coming from the centre of the Earth. The hot streams running down the lofty Mount were his bitter tears.

Treachery and intrigue figured high among Nart themes. However, malfeasance always rebounded on the initiator—a case of evil coming home to roost. In a blood-curdling episode of the Epos, one of the most ferocious Narts, sensing the perfidy of a group of back-stabbers who wanted him out of the scene and his impending doom, went berserk and unleashed his rabid sword which severed the heads and limbs of the machinators.

The Nart Epic encapsulates the code of chivalry of the Circassians. The tales (of which more than 700 have been recorded) give the reader insights into the ancient culture and mores of the Northwest Caucasians (and the influences from other cultures that they have come in contact with). There were many Nart characters, the most famous of whom, besides those mentioned above, were: Bedinoqwe, X'imisch, Beterez,

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<sup>10</sup> In Circassian mythology, it was Nart Sosriqwe, minion of the gods and his doting mother, Lady Satanay, who stole fire from the abode of the giant.

Yimis, Sibilshiy, Sosim, Zchinduzchach'e (Owl-beard), Areqshu, Toteresh, Ashe, Ashemez, Wezirmes, Wezirmej, 'Ediyixw, and her husband Psebide. Each one of these embodied unique attributes besides the common Nart qualities. There were also giants, pigmies, predatory enemies, anti-heroes, gods, anti-gods, demi-gods who combined both human and god-like characteristics, not forgetting Caucasian Medusas casting their petrifying eyes upon unwary fools and heroes, and so on.

Horses enjoyed a high status among the Narts, who bestowed upon them personal names. The steeds possessed extraordinary strength and powers of reason, capable of fantastic feats and rational counsel and advice. They engendered loyalty in their owners.

The Nart legends may be used as powerful means of inculcating desirable characteristics in young people. Being the major depository of Circassian Etiquette, positive aspects could be emphasized and used as exhortations. For example, in the story 'Sosriqwe and Toteresh,' the invincible Toteresh son of Albech gives Sosriqwe a leave of execution until the next morning, the time of their epic duel on Mount Hereme. 'He who forfeits a date was not born a man by his mother,' he said as he let Sosriqwe go. This expression could be used to counteract procrastination and indifference, two rampant maladies in backward societies. Sosriqwe was able to prevail over Toteresh by using ruse and magic invoked by his protective mother, Satanay.

In the tale 'Meeting of Sosriqwe and 'Ediyixw,' [*The Narts*, Nalchik, pp 124 ff], the self-conceit of Psebide (literally: 'Tenacious of Life') led to his agonizing death. A single word of gratitude for her help would have been enough to appease 'Ediyixw, his wife. But, no. He was blinded by conceit and refused to acknowledge her role, which forced her to withhold the light of her hand (Иэдийху ['Ediyixw]: Эдий ['edy] = forearm and wrist, xy [xw] = white), which he previously used to gain advantage over his adversaries and thus obtain great plunder. After a lengthy and tortuous adventure sans the light of his wife's arm, the obstinate Nart found his death in the River Yinzhi, which he thought he could cross, since Sosriqwe possessed the ability to cross the treacherous and violent river without difficulty, and he was not to be outdone by anyone in anything.

Just after his death, 'Ediyixw learned the shocking fact that her ex-husband was not only self-conceited, but that he was narcissistic—his love for himself precluded any feeling for other people, including his adoring wife. As she made to undo the majestic tumulus she erected on his grave, Sosriqwe stopped her saying: 'You toiled to build it. Now, he's simply not worth the bother to remove it.' The lifeless dark mound was left as a stark reminder of the fate of self-centred people.

In a reminder of the relativity of our systems of morals and how wrong and right have been flitting across the ethical divide, some practices, which nowadays would be considered utterly repulsive, were in the usual run of affairs. For example, there was nothing morbid about necrophily. On at least two separate occasions, Sosriqwe committed the creepy act with his dead paramours, after digging them up from their graves. According to the tale 'Thus did Sosriqwe pass through the hole of the hip bone riding his steed,' the warped offspring of necrophilia belonged to the Underworld, unable to join Nart society (A. Hedeghel'e, 1968-71, vol. 2, pp 193 ff).

### **'Historical' Poems & Tales**

Many of the ancient poems and stories were on historical and heroic themes. Nogmov collected specimens of these works to reconstruct a skeletal treatise on Adiga history. Some pieces of poetry go back to hundreds of years. An epic poem recounts one episode of the bloody wars the Circassians waged against the invading Goths:

Oh, Fatherland of Bakhsan son of Dow!  
Though his soul has left his body,  
Do not allow the Goths to ruffle your dignity!  
And if they make to enthrall you,  
Throw their yoke off your shoulders!

It was this self-same Bakhsan whose sister commissioned a statue to be erected in his memory.



The first modern Circassian historian and folklorist, Shora Negwme preserved many of the legends and tales of the Circassians.

The horrible memory of the Huns and their leader, Attila, was preserved in the following stanza:

And the Lord did not forsake us,  
He bestowed his mercy upon us,  
He restored our mounts and vales  
After the 'Scourge of God' was no more!

Legend has it that in celebration of this event, Mount Shad (Elbrus) was renamed the 'Blessed Hill.'

Bayan, the treacherous khan of the bloodthirsty Avars, received an ample share of polemic on account of his massacre of the cream of Circassian elders:

Our Saint and Saviour Elija,  
Mighty and Benevolent!  
Send your scourge from above,  
And undo Baykan's steed

With your pious hand,  
Purer than our eternal snows.

### Classical Literature

One of the principal milestones in the development of literature is the birth of plot. According to the Circassian scholar and writer Askerbi T. Shortan, the first evidence of plot can be found in the mythological motifs of the tale ‘Psherihizchatse’ («ПШЭРЫХЫЖЬАЦЭ») a mixture of prose and verse. In a capsule, the evil hunter Psherihizchatse, who lived in the forest, was so capricious that he slew all the village boys who were sent to cook for him because they did not wake him with due care. One mangy, but clever lad was able to escape this mortal fate. When the deer came weeping to the yard, he did not call the hunter; instead, he chanted the song of the chase to awaken him. Psherihizchatse arose and hunted. He kept the considerate boy as his menial.<sup>11</sup>

One of the first instances of dialogue in Circassian literature is in the ancient tale ‘The Elegy of the Maid who Refused to Marry her Brother’ («Дэльхум дэКлуэн зымыда хьыджэбзым и уэрэдыр») which gives us a glimpse of those far away days when incest was not yet tabooed. The poor girl begs the members of her family in turn to let her inside the house. Such stories are considered the forerunners of Circassian drama.

— А си анэ дыщэурэ,  
А си дыщэ пльыжь,  
Мы бжэр нысхуІупхыркъэ,  
ЩыІэм сегьалІэри.

— My dearest Mother,  
Radiant as red gilt!  
I beseech you: Open this door.  
The chill is killing me.

— Си гуащэжьыр жыпІэтэмэ,  
НыпхуІусхынт.

— If you would just call me mother-in-law,  
I would open it for you.

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<sup>11</sup> ПшэрыхьыжьацэКІэ зэджэ щакІуэ бзаджэр мэзым щІэсщ. Ар апхуэдизКІэ кьанлыщи, пщафІэу кьуажэм кьыхуагьакІуэ дэтхэнэ щІалэри еукІ, сакьыу кьызэрамыгьэушым папщІэ. Абы Іэмал хуекІуэфар щІалэ кьуйи гуэрщ. Щыхьхэр гьуэгыу хьэмым кьыщытехьэм, ар Пшэрыхьыжьацэм еджакьым кьигьэушыну, атІэ щакІуэ уэрэд кьыхидзэри абыКІэ кьигьэушащ. Пшэрыхьыжьацэ кьэтэджри щэКІуащ, щІалэри имьукІыу пщафІэу кьигьэнащ.

— Си псэ тэкIур пытурэ  
Дауэ пхужысIэн.

— How can I call you thus,  
Whilst there is still life in my bones.

Simile was extensively used. Female characteristics were compared to those of animals: body and gait of a doe, colour of swallow, gentle as a lamb, fertile as a cat, famous as a good horse. Symbols included: mist = oppression and fear; stone = home, security; garden in bloom = thriving; pear, pear-skin = success and progress; sprinkled water = indigence, sadness; gold, silver = wealth, status of women (wedding-dress was decorated with silver); corn = blessing; snow-peaked mountain = cleanliness, timelessness; horseshoe = good luck; broken horseshoe = misfortune, woe; dove = love; fox = cunning; eagle = warrior, hero; turkey = hubris; raven = foe, death. Colours also had special significance: yellow = person gets what he wants; green = hopes and wishes; black = bad luck, and so on.

Parables and allegories were used to circumvent direct answers and for show. Some memorable dialogues have come down to us demonstrating wit and linguistic skill. These are mainly between girls and their suitors. Many a girl declined offers of marriage using indirect language:

— Си Iэгу из мэракIуэ,  
СрикIуэну зы лъагъуэ,  
Сигу илъыну зы псалъэ,  
Лъэпкъ сыхъунуш,  
КъыздэкIуэ.

— *Siy 'egw yiz merak 'we,*  
*Sriyk 'wenu zi lhaghwe,*  
*Siygw yilhinu zi psalhe,*  
*Lhepq six 'wnusch,*  
*Qizdek 'we.*

My hand is full of berries,  
I have but one path to take,  
A single word shall remain in my heart,  
I shall have a large progeny,  
Marry me.

— Махуэм зыужъу,  
Акъужьым зиудэу,  
ПщIэгъуалэр дэжейуэ,  
ПщIэгъуэплъыр къежэхуэ,  
Джэдыр къелъыхуэ,  
Къазыр дэльейуэ—  
Апхуэдэ махуэм  
СыныбдэкIуэнц.

— *Maxwem ziywizchu,*  
*Aqwzchim ziywidew,*  
*Psch 'eghwaler dezheywe,*  
*Pts 'eghwephlhir qeizhexiu,*  
*Jedir qeilhixiu,*  
*Qazir delheywe—*  
*Apxwede maxwem*  
*Sinibdek 'wensch.*

As the day progresses,  
The south wind flinches,  
The grey horse gallops up,  
The bay trots down,  
The hen leaps down,  
The goose perches up—  
On such a day  
I shall betroth you.

Although it is impossible to do justice to the symbols used and to convey the shades of meanings intended, the turn-down is obvious. On the other hand, in the expression «КЪуанщІэ фІыцІэ дамагуэм сырытемыльхъэ» (*‘Qwansch’e f’its’e damagwem siriteimilhhe’*), literally, ‘Do not join me to the wing of a black raven’, the unkind words are designed to convey the vehemence of rejection (5).

A nosy question was answered thus: «Тэрч кхъуэ исыкІащ» (*‘Terch q’we yisich’asch’*)—‘The pig swam across the Terek.’ One elaborate way of expressing ‘Don’t soil my name with your tongue,’ was rendered thus:

Си джанэ хужь пщампІэм	<i>Siy jane xwzch pschamp’em</i>	Through the collar of my white shirt
Іуданэ фІыцІэкІэ	<i>’Wdane f’its’ech’e</i>	Do not pass
УкЪыкІуэцІрымыкІ.	<i>Wiqik’wets’rimich’.</i>	A black thread.

Examples of hyperbole abound. Two segments from episodes involving Theghelej, god of flora, are selected:

Іэ кІуэцІищэр зы пхыру,  
 И пхырищэр зы мэш Іэтэу,  
 Мэш Іэтищэр зы гъэсэгуу,  
 Гъэсэгуищэр зы щэджыжъу,  
 Щэджыжъ щий кърхаш.

Hundred handfuls make one sheaf,  
 Five score sheaves one rick,  
 Hundred ricks make one stook,  
 Hundred stooks one stack.  
 He reaped eight hundred stacks.  
*[giving 80,000,000,000 handfuls in total!]*

ВитІым Лабэрэ Псыжърэ я кур жэщым яхъурт.  
 Пщэдджыжъым Лабэ ирафырти, ягъэгъурт,

Пщыхъэшхъэм Псыжь ирафырти, ари ягъэгъурт.

At night, the two bullocks fattened up on the lands 'twixt the Laba and Kuban.

In the morrow they drank the Laba, and dried it up,  
In the even they drank the Kuban, and drained it too.

Rhythm and foot were very important in poetry and song. Many techniques were used to bring balance to asymmetric stanzas. Among these was the insertion of syllables, such as «жи» ('*zhiy*'), «уэ» ('*we*'), «уэй» ('*wey*'), «уэйжи» ('*weyzhiy*'), «армэ» ('*arme*'), «уий» ('*wiy*'), «гушэ» ('*gwsche*'), «мыгъуэ» ('*mighwe*'), and «мыдэкIэ» ('*midech'e*'). Although these 'additives' do not interfere with the meaning, they add mood to the songs, «мыгъуэ» ('*mighwe*'), for example, being used in dirges, «уэйжи» ('*weyzhiy*') in 'joyful' airs.

[Армэ,] СосрыкъуапцIэ,	[ <i>Arme,</i> ] <i>Sosriqwaps'e,</i>	Swarthy Sosriqwe,
[Армэ,] лЫ фIыцIэ гъушIынэ,	[ <i>Arme,</i> ] <i>l'if'its'e ghwsch'ine,</i>	The iron-eyed darksome man,
[МыдэкIэ,] емынэ шу...	[ <i>Midech'e,</i> ] <i>yemine shu...</i>	Most intrepid knight... <sup>12</sup>

An assortment of rhythms was used. The most widespread was the mixed rhythm, whereby the final syllable of a line was repeated at the start or middle of the next. The toast to abundant crop affords an example:

Я дэ ди <b>тхъэ</b> ,	<i>Ya de diy <b>the</b>,</i>	Our God,
<b>Тхъэгъэлэдж</b> ,	<i><b>Theghelej,</b></i>	Theghelej,
Тельыд <b>ж</b> эр зи Iу <b>ж</b> ь,	<i>Teilhijer ziy 'ewiz<b>ch</b>,</i>	Of wonderful blessings,
Едгъэ <b>ж</b> ьа Iуэхур гъэбагъуэ.	<i>Yedghez<b>cha</b> 'wexwr ghebaghwe.</i>	Do multiply our yield.

Final rhythm was also in use:

Вабдзэм и махуэр щIэдгъэл <b>ь</b> ауэ,	<i>Vabdzem yi maxwer sch'edghel<b>h</b>awe,</i>
Гъунэм и махуэр ит <b>ь</b> ауэ,	<i>Ghwnem yi maxwer yit<b>h</b>awe,</i>

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<sup>12</sup> From the tale «Сосрыкъуэ мафIэ къехъ» ('*Sosriqwe Fetches Fire*').



ЩЫЛЬЭМ и хуабэр хыхьауэ,  
Бэвым и кыпIэм дытехьауэ,  
Я ди тхэ кыщIэукI.

*Sch'ilhem yi xwaber xihawe,*  
*Bevim yi ch'ip'em diteihawe,*  
*Ya diy the qisch'ewich'.*

Classical poems and traditional songs used mostly consonants for rhythm. In general, rhyme brought words in harmony with the tune. It is thanks to rhyme, and of course to the high quality of the lyrics, that the ancient songs managed to survive. In the 1930s, Ali Schojents'ik'w experimented with mixing classical rhythm with Western forms thereof, for example in his poem 'Off the Threshold':

Махуэр уейщи жьы зэпихум	<i>Maxwer weyschiy zchi zepiyxwm</i>	The day so bad,
Хуарзэу уэсыр кырехьэкI,	<i>Xwarzew wesir qireihech'</i> ,	The wind carries the floating snow,
КъуакIи тафи кымыгъанэу	<i>Qwach'iy tafiy qiymighanew</i>	All vales and steppes
Джэбын хужьыр кырешэкI.	<i>Jebin xwzchir qireishech'.</i>	Are covered by the white shroud.

Most modern poets use final rhythm. Among those who took this form to uncharted heights were Alim Keshokov, Beit'al K'wasch, Adem Schojents'ik'w, Boris Taw.<sup>13</sup>

Epithets throw light on many aspects of the classical Circassian society, and certainly give us a glimpse of the way the Adiga viewed the world, and the ideals they cherished. Embroidery was a skill much esteemed in a daughter-in-law. Many expressions were employed to extolling it, for example, «мастэ зыгъэфий зи Iэпэ» (*'maste zighefiy ziy 'epe'*)—'she whose fingertips make the needle whistle.' Courage and fortitude were expected of young men:

Лым я лейуэ щхэ хьыжьэ,	<i>L'im ya leywe schhe x'izche,</i>	He is the most daring of them all,
Зауэ кьэхьум лы хахуэ,	<i>Zawe qex'wm l'i xaxwe,</i>	He is the first to battle,
Iэщэ ипхым шынагъуэу,	<i>'Esche yipxim shinaghew,</i>	Terrifying in his full armour,
Бийм и гущIыур зи гъуэгү...	<i>Biym yi gwsch'i'wr ziy ghwegw ...</i>	His path runs over his supine foe ...

<sup>13</sup> See A. Hek'wasche, 1984, pp 166-96, for an account of rhythm in ancient and modern Circassian poetry.

## Traditional Literature

Folkloric stories and tales broached many themes. Fables and apologues were used to convey morals and useful lessons. In many of these the actors and speakers were animals, taking us back to the age when man thought that animals were rational beings capable of speech and reasoned thinking. Allegory was also used. The eternal struggle between good and evil was one of the principal themes of the Circassian oral tradition being extensively used in allegorical tales. In Western Circassian tales, evil was always undone, which was a reflection of the healthful state of mind of the people.

In addition to being reflections of the mores of a people, proverbs and sayings have an intrinsic literary value. Many of these are rhymed and enveloped in elevated language. For example: «Шэми сес, шхуми сес» (*Shemiy seis, shxwmiy seis*) 'Between Scylla and Charybdis'; and «КЪЭМЫКІА ПАБЖЪЭМ КЪЭМЫЛЪХУА ТХЪЭКІУМЭКІЫХЪЫР ХЭСШ» (*Qemich'a pabzchem qemilhxwa thek'wmech'ihir xessch*) 'The unborn hare hides in the ungrown bush,' which is said of a barefaced lie. One of the most popular sayings, «Гупсыси псалъэ, зыплъыхъи тыс» (*Gwpsisiy psalhe, ziplhihiy t'is*) 'Think today and speak tomorrow, look around and then take your seat,' combines economy of expression with pregnant meaning, almost encapsulating the gist of Circassian Etiquette.

Nice and simple rhythms are also evidenced, for example in «Такъуэр закъуэ палъэш(и), закъуэр ла пэлытэш» (*T'aqwer zaqwe palhesch(iy), zaqwer l'a pelhitesch*) 'One man, no man.' There is even music in some of them, e.g. in «Тэм тэ и цлэщи, цэм шэ и цлэш» (*Tem te yi ts'eschiy, schem sche yi ts'esch*) 'Keep friendship and money apart.' Usually the gist of the saws is expressed in a direct manner, allegory being seldom used.

Riddles and enigmas are the most entertaining of the literary forms and the richest linguistically. They still bear traces of the mystical age. In some of these the forces of nature are compared to inanimate beings, in

others to animals, in a third class stars and other natural phenomena are given human forms and endowed with personalities.

Examples: ‘In the skies there are gilded patterns’—‘Stars’; ‘The ocean is covered with a carpet’—‘Ice’; ‘A golden cane lies on our roof’—‘Sunrays.’ Conundrums and posers were also used by some discerning girls to gauge the quick wit of their suitors. Some of the classics of this genre include ‘Pithy Girl’ («ПИЦАЦЭ ШЭРЫУЭ», ‘*Pschasche Sheriwe*’), ‘Little Tram’, ‘The Maid’s Betrothal’, and ‘The Maid and the Bridegroom’.

### Children’s Literature

Fables and allegories spilled over into children’s literature. Among best known tales, which have become classics, are ‘The Hare, Fox, and Wolf’ and ‘The Little Old Man, and the Little Old Woman.’

Most nursery rhymes use mixed rhythm. An example is afforded by the popular ‘Yinemiqwe’, which also serves as a children’s game:

Инэмыкьуэ	Yinemiqwe
Инэ-инэ, Инэмыкьуэ, Мыкьуэ щхьэл, Щхьэл кьутэ, Кьутэроу, Щомыхьу, Щохьурзэ, Хьурзэ натIэ, Хьэ натIищ, Лищ зыукI, ЗыукIыж, Льэрыгьагь, Льэрыгьыпс, Хьэнтхьупсафэ, Псафэ егьу, Хьурей накIуэ,	Yine-yine, Yinemiqwe, Miqwe schhel, Schhel qwte, Qwterow, Schomix'w, Schox'wrze, X'wrze nat'e, He nat'iysch, L'iysch ziwich', Zizuch'izh, Lherighagh, Lherighips, Hentx'wpsafe, Psafe yeghw, X'wrey nak'we,

НакIуэ тIыс, тIыс, Аслъэн! Аслъэныкъуэ, Лъакъуэ кIыхь, КIэн къэхьы Дыгъэджэгу, Шатэ къэхьы Дыгъэшхыж.	Nak'we t'is, T'is, Aslhen! Aslheniqwe, Lhaqwe ch'ih, Ch'en qehiy Dighejegw, Shate qehiy Digheshxizh.
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Patter and tongue-twisters have always been indispensable pronunciation teaching tools, besides being amusing components of children's literature. The richness and compactness of consonants and dearth of vowels combine to produce veritable tongue-knotters, perhaps unparalleled in any other language. Three twisters are given as examples:

**Шыбжиипль — псы плъыжьыбзэ, шыбжиипль — псы плъыжьыбзэ.**  
*Shibzhiyyiplh — psi plhizchibze, shibzhiyyiplh — psi plhizchibze.*  
 Red pepper — bright red water, red pepper — bright red water.

**ГъукIэр бгъукIэ къапкIэри пкIэлъейм дэлъейжаш.**  
*Ghwch'er bghwch'e qarqch'eriy pch'elheym delheyzhasch.*  
 The smith leapt nine times and climbed up the ladder.

**Мо тIы фIыщIэ цы фIыщIэр уи закъуэ уи тIы фIыщIэ цы фIыщIэ?  
 Мо тIы фIыщIэ цы фIыщIэр ди зэхуэдэ тIы фIыщIэ цы фIыщIэш.**  
*Mo t'i f'its'e tsi f'its'er wiy zaqwe wiy t'i f'its'e tsi f'its'e?*  
*Mo t'i f'its'e tsi f'its'er diy zexwede t'i f'its'e tsi f'its'esch.*  
 Is that black-woolled black ram your own black-woolled black ram?  
 That black-woolled black ram is a black-woolled black ram for all of us.

**Урыхужьыр мывэ хужьым губжьауэ жьэхэуэри ирихужьэри ежьэжаш.**  
*Wirixwzchir mive xwzchim gwbzchawe zchexeweriy yiriyxwzcheriy yezchezhasch.*  
 The great river Uruk had banged the white stone on the face with fury, kicked it out of bed, and then went on its way.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> According to popular tradition, the large stones in the bed of the Uruk River are the Abre Stones (абрэмывэ; stones of enormous size and immense weight)

In 1956, Nikolai Bagh [Багъ Николай] published a book on methods of teaching Circassian, which included a collection of short rhyming poems of high calibre for each of the letters of the alphabet. The one for ‘A’ ran as follows:

Ажэм жьакIэр егъэсыс,	<i>Azhem zchach'er yeghesis,</i>	Billy-goat shakes his goatee,
Ар хуэщIыну хуейщ нэмыс,	<i>Ar xwasch'inu xweysch nemis,</i>	As is dictated by habit,
Ауэ мэлхэм гу зыльатэр,	<i>Awe melxem gw zilhater</i>	But the sheep consider
Ажэм и бжьэр зэрыджатэрщ.	<i>Azhem yi bzcher zerijatersch.</i>	Billy's horn a rapier.

There has been a considerable body of published works on children's literature. A collection of tales, *Lhapschaghwe Son of Negey: Circassian Tales* [НЭГЕЙ И КЪУЭ ЛЪАПЦАГЪУЭ: Адыгэ таурыхъхэр], written by literary masters specifically for children was published by Elbrus Press in Nalchik in 1981, the gems selected by 'Eziyd K'want'e (КIуантIэ Iэзид). Many of the works of the well-known writer Zawir Nalo [Нало Заур] were dedicated to children, including his collection of poems and pater *Jegwzexeshe* [ДЖЭГУЗЭХЭШЭ], published in Nalchik in 1972. A monthly magazine dedicated to children, *Nur* [Нур], first issued in January 1982, is published by the Union of the Writers of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR and the Regional Committee of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union. About 10,000 copies are printed by Elbrus Press. In Adigea a children's magazine, *Zchweghbin* (Жъогъбын [Вагъуэбын]; Constellation), is published in Adigean.

### **Romanticism**

The Russian literary giants of the 19th century, like Pushkin, Tolstoy and Lermontov, were profoundly influenced by the North Caucasus and its inhabitants. Their writing coincided with the protracted conflict that raged in the area. They portrayed the native North Caucasians as noble

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of the Narts. The poem 'Abremive' «АБРЭМЫВЭ» by the 20th century Kabardian literary giant Alim Ch'ischoqwe (Keshokov) is a literary manifestation of this belief.

savages, which image did re-enforce the principal tenet of Russian colonial policy that these nations were in dire need of Russia's 'civilizing' mission.<sup>15</sup>

Not only Russian writers were infected, but also Western writers were not immune from the romantic influences of the Caucasus. A large corpus of works appeared in the first half of the 19th century, spurred by the heroic feats of the North Caucasians. Some researchers even collected some legends and tales. Among these works, one may mention *Circassian Tale* by Saunders, *Contes et légendes du Caucase* by Jules Mourier, and *La Circassienne* by Alex. Marie Anne de la Vaissier de Lavergne.

### **Early writers**

Curiously enough, the spirit of romanticism even infected the Circassians themselves. In the first half of the 19th century, a new breed of Circassian writers began to appear on the scene. Educated in Russian schools and steeped in Russian culture, they went on to produce literary gems in Russian that were almost on a par with the classic works of the Russian romantic writers of the time. The first writer of this genre was Sulht'an Qaz-Girey (1807-1863) who was born to a family belonging to the X'imisch clan. On April 1st 1836, he published 'Hezhit'eghwey Village' in the journal *Sovremennik*, alongside works by Gogol, Pushkin and Zhukov.

Adil-Girey Ch'ashe (1840-1872), alias Qalembiy (Kalambi), produced some novels based on realism, treating of some aspects of Circassian customs. In his novel *The Abreks* he selected blood-revenge and outlaw horsemen as his themes, which were seized upon by later writers in the Soviet period like Tembot Kerashev, Alim Keshokov, Khachim Teunov, and others.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, S. Layton, 1995, 1999, and 2001.

<sup>16</sup> *Abrek* (абрэдж; *abrej*) originally designated a person who lived without the canons of Circassian customs and traditions (адыгэ хабзэ; *Adige Xabze*); therefore, an outlaw. For example, a murderer who wanted to escape the revenge of the kin of a slain person would hide in deep forests or high mountains in the light of day, and roam the land in the safety of the night. In the

### **Tsarist literature**

After the Russian conquest, many traditional cultural institutions fell into ruin, literature being a principal victim. The mass exodus meant that many of the literary traditions were either lost or suffered major setbacks. The immigrants took with them a significant portion of national lore. The literary tradition of whole tribes was displaced, to be gradually lost through assimilation. The rump of the nation left in the Caucasus was puny, and was able to produce only a pitiable number of literary figures.

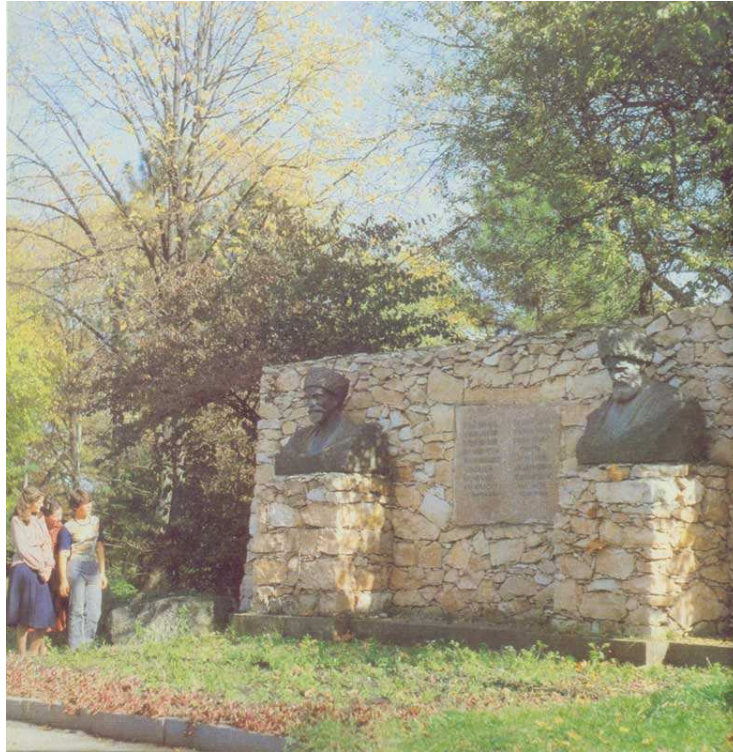
Kazi Atazhukin was one of those who kept the torch aflame. He collected many legends, published excerpts from Sosriqwe's and Bedinoqwe's epic poetry and other tales. He also translated Lermontov's *Ashik-Kerab* into Kabardian. Another literary figure of the period was Bechmirze Pasch'e (Пашцэ Бэчмырзэ; Pachev) (1854-1936), a poet of considerable talent, who still holds a special place as one of the prominent figures of national culture, and is accredited with founding modern Kabardian poetry. He was able to render oral traditions into literary language. He devised an alphabet for Kabardian and taught it to the common folk. In addition, he wrote lyrics for many songs. Pasch'e immortalized the Kabardian revolt of 1913 against Tsarist rule in the famous song 'Dzeliqwe War' («ДЗЭЛЫКЪУЭ ЗАУЭ»). Apart from being the founder of modern Kabardian poetry, Pasch'e was a very versatile songwriter, in the best tradition of the Circassian bards (джэгуакIуэ). He made use of the traditional heroic song genre to convey his ideas, as in 'The Song of Wezi Murat' («УЭЗЫ МУРАТ И УЭРЭД»; 'Wezi Murat yi Wered').<sup>17</sup> Of him Shortanov wrote: 'The works of this great poet are

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Russian and later Soviet ethos, the *abreks* were hunted down as inveterate criminals by the authorities. Two songs that glorify famous *abreks*, 'The Song of Wezi Murat' («УЭЗЫ МУРАТ И УЭРЭД»; 'Wezi Murat yi Wered'), and 'The Song of Yismeil Cherti' («Чэрти [Черти] Исмел и уэрэд»; 'Cherti [Cheirtiy] Yismeil yi Wered') can be found on this page, both sung by Zhiraslhen Ghwch'el' (ГъукIэлI Жыраслъэн).

<sup>17</sup> An audio recording of 'The Song of Wezi Murat' («УЭЗЫ МУРАТ И УЭРЭД») can be found on this page, sung by Zhiraslhen Ghwch'el' (ГъукIэлI Жыраслъэн).

intimately connected with the fatherland. They throw light upon the yearnings, history, and current situation of his people. He is verily the poet of the masses.’ In recognition of these contributions, a bust of Pasch’e was erected at the City Park in Nalchik.



Bust of Pasch’e (on the right) at the City Park in Nalchik.

Among those who were born in the tsarist period, Amirx’an As-hed Hex’wrasch’e (ХьэхъупащӀэ Асхьэд и къуэ Амырхъан), born in 1882, stands out as a master of comic poetry. He went on to become one of the most famous Circassian literary figures of the early Soviet years. He was also a talented songwriter.

The works of Ibrahim Tsey (1895-1936) span both the Tsarist and Soviet periods. He wrote two novels: *Kochas*, about a Circassian martyr in the Russian-Caucasian War, and «Узышхуэ» (*Wizishxwe*), ‘The Great Scourge,’ depicting the life of Circassian peasants, and some poems and



real-life tales. He was also known as a writer of fables, including 'The Wolf and the Lamb,' 'The Frog and the Ox,' and 'The Two Mice.' Some of these fables were collected and published by Dumézil and Aytek Namitok. According to A. Ashemez, 'Tsey, as regards richness of style, colourfulness, national consciousness, and the sheer gift of how to treat fables was unsurpassed.' His works were characterized by variety in subject matter and employment of different genres.

By the end of this period, a class of accomplished literary writers had emerged, which published works in the native language. Circassian literature had survived and even began to thrive. However, a twist in Russia's history was to fling it off-course for almost 70 years.

### **Soviet Period**

In the Soviet era, there was a shift of emphasis in literature from the traditional and folkloric themes to dissemination of Communist dogmas and concepts in 'modern' settings. However, literary genres and rules associated with the oral tradition were used extensively in the new drive, especially in the 1920s. Even to this day, no writer can really divorce his work from the rich traditional themes. However, the development of concepts and ideas had gone one step beyond.

Early works were characterized by a symbiosis between epic and mundane themes. Cosmic ideas of the Nart era, feats of heroism, the sagacity and moral rectitude of the olden times were juxtaposed against ordinary everyday themes. Ancient similes, symbols, and denotations spilled over into the new writings. For example, Alim Keshokov used *Broken Horseshoe* and *Pear-skin* as titles of two of his works of fiction to signify 'misfortune' and 'success,' respectively. People versed with the oral tradition would have immediately appreciated the meanings intended. Among the fiction writers of the 1930s whose works were greatly influenced by the oral tradition were Zhansex'w Nalo, Sosriqwe Qwezhey, Tembot Ch'erashe (Kerashev), and Muhemed Dischech'.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For a full treatment of influence of oral traditions on the modern Circassian novel, refer to A. Musukai, 1992, pp 114-17.

The 1950s witnessed a revival of interest in traditional themes, after the turbulence of World War II. The two literary giants of the latter half of the 20th century, Yis-heq Meshbash and Alim Keshokov, are the protagonists of the inbreeding of the old with the new. Perhaps this could partly explain their greatness. The authorities effected a dramatic literary transformation, raising the educational level of the masses. This was a prelude to inculcating them with the new ideology. Many of the writers born just before or during the Soviet period were bilingual in their literary output, Russian being the second language. Some Circassian writers, including the poet and dramatist Nalo(ev) and Pschinqwe, were persecuted during the 1936-38 purges, being accused of counter-revolutionary activities, including denigrating the collective farm system.

The writers who emerged in this period were obliged to toe the line and use their works to promulgate, among other things, Soviet historiography. The classic example of this 'genre' of writing was Shortan's *The Mountaineers* (БГЫРЫСХЭР), in which the Russian-Caucasian War was reduced to a struggle between the evil princes and nobles, and their nefarious allies, the Turks, Tatars, British, on the one hand, and the masses who wanted to rid themselves of the oppressive yoke. And who were the deliverers of these 'poor buggers'? Yes, you guessed it. It was the magnanimous and chivalrous Russians! This once seminal work, commissioned by special order from the Kremlin, could have been thrown on the rubbish heap of history, had it not been for the exquisite beauty of the language and mastery of the 'misguided' author, which have made the work a classic.<sup>19</sup>

Another yoke thrown round the necks of the new breed of non-Russian Soviet writers was the obligation to portray the state of bliss brought about by the revolution and pay tribute to the guiding hand of the Russian 'Big Brother.' The work that epitomizes this thrust of Communist propaganda is Asker Yevtikh's work *In Our Village*, in which blissful life in a typical village in Adigea is depicted. The head of one of the kolkhozes boasts that, whereas many people in the United

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<sup>19</sup> This work is reviewed by G. Deeters in *Caucasian Review*, no. 2, 1956, pp 110-11.

States do not find enough bread to eat, the workers in his concern never go short. Some Russian characters provide role models to the ‘half-civilized’ Adigeans. It was translated into Russian and published in the exclusive literary magazine ‘The New World’ in 1953. According to one critic, Yevtikh came to reflect the new face of post-War Adigea. However, the self-same reviewer is troubled by the lack of enemies to contend with, as Soviet ideology thrived on finding bugbears and bogeys to justify the existence of the state and institutionalize repression. In 1941 he wrote *My Elder Brother*.

An unlikely ‘literary hero’ of the era was the illiterate herdsman Tsighw Teuchezh—a gainsay only the Soviet System was capable of producing. Teuchezh, born in 1855 in the village of Ghwabeqwaye in present-day Adigea, was a skilful storyteller, in the best Caucasian tradition. In his mid-sixties at the establishment of Soviet power, he was used as a pawn in a propaganda game that had him squander his considerable talent on senseless falsification of national history. In 1937-38 he ‘wrote’ the epic poem ‘War of the Princes and Nobles’ («ПШЫ-ОРКЪ ЗАУ»; *Pshi-Werq Zaw*), which depicted the tyranny of the feudal ruling classes and how the people struggled to rid themselves of their injustice.<sup>20</sup> He dictated many a poem dedicated to ‘Stalin the Great,’ in accordance with Party instructions.

In all the examples presented, great talent was wasted on frivolous causes and futile pursuits. Misguided ideology works like venom in the innards of a people, and they suffer for it. It is a great credit to the skill and mastery of the writers of the time that their works are still read with avidity, despite overdoses of drivel.

One of the most prolific Circassian writers of the 20th century was Kuba Csaban whose work spanned two periods, early Soviet and diaspora. He taught Circassian language and literature in Maikop from 1919 to 1936, and later held a teaching position at the Lokhanersky Theatrical Institute in Moscow. Upon his return to Maikop, he indulged in studying and

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<sup>20</sup> Original was published in Maikop, 1939. It is also included in a collection of his works «НАСЫП ІАХЪ» (*Nasip 'Ah*) [*Lucky Lot*], published in Maikop in 1980.

collecting Circassian folklore at the Adigean Research Institute, leading a team of specialists. He immigrated to Jordan after World War II, where he continued writing and doing research. He worked with the New Generation Club (НыбжьыщӀэ Хасэ) in Amman. He effected a kind of a cultural renaissance among the Circassian youth, attracting a number of disciples who were exposed first-hand to the recent developments in national literature. His output included works of fiction, folkloric collections, poems, children's pedagogical books, historical accounts, plays, two operettas, dictionaries and grammar books. Unfortunately, after his death, no one was able to take up the torch, and thus a golden opportunity was missed to propagate his heritage.

Ali As-hed Schojents'ik'w (1900-1941) wrote and published many collections of poems and works of fiction, like *The Young Hero*. His classic poem 'Off the Threshold' was the theme of F. A. Silyakhin's short cantata *Fortune is Nigh*. A dictionary of his literary language was compiled by Liywan Zex'wex'w in acknowledgement of his linguistic mastery.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Zex'wex'w, L. H., *Dictionary of the Literary Language of Ali Schojents'ik'w*, Nalchik, 1975.



Ali Schojents'ik'w's early death at the age of 41 was deemed a great loss to Circassian literature.

[Alim Pschimaxwe Ch'ischoqwe](#) (Къыщокъуэ Пщымахуэ и къуэ Алим; Keshokov) (1914-2001) who was born in Kabarda in eastern Circassia (now the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic) into a peasant family of average means, was one of the most influential Circassian literary figures of the second half of the 20th century. Born in the village of Schheliqwe (Щхьэлыкъуэ; *aka* Shalushka) in the Chegem (Шэджэм) Region at the foot of 'Waschhemaxwe (Уащхьэмахуэ), or Mount Elbrus (5,643m), Ch'ischoqwe had a meteoric rise up the echelons of the Union of Soviet Writers, occupying the influential post of secretary for many years. He penned many works of prose and has more than 20 collections of poems and also won the prestigious Maxim Gorky Literary Prize and the Russian Federation State Prize. He was named People's Poet of Kabardino-Balkaria for his services to Soviet and Kabardian literatures. Some of his poetical works were translated to English. His verse breathes the air of the sunlit valleys and stern summits of his native land and sings the rich inner world of a man of labour, his life, valour and love. The

following snippets from different poems were culled from his work  
'Starlit Hours', interpreted by various translators:

**I heard the call of mountain peaks.**

My path was crossed by the raging stream.  
I ventured in and fought towards  
The cloudy mountains of my dream.

Not always have I followed strictly  
The rules my forebears held so high.  
**Imagined things do move me deeply**  
Yet never have I stooped to lies.

It might be white, like a field in hoary frost,  
Or black as a furrow in the dale,  
But the name '**Cherkesska**' never will be lost.  
To change it tongues will ever fail.

'The Colour of Joy'  
And so, if my hair has begun to go white,  
It means that in broad light of day  
The herald of grief, from the herald of joy,  
Once stole his swift stallion away.

You will not start to vainly swear;  
You live, and count hot words not worth.  
To me, a true Caucasian here,  
**My native land**, you've given birth.



Alim Ch'ischoqwe has preserved a considerable portion of (East) Circassian literature and folklore. His monumental works form one of the pillars of Circassian literature.<sup>22</sup>

Adam Schojents'ikw (1916-1995) was an important writer, poet and playwright. he published works in both Circassian and Russian.

The People's Writer of Adigea and Kabardino-Balkaria, Yis-heq Meshbash (Meshbesch'e), has produced many seminal works including 'Bziyiqwe War,' which was translated to Russian, Turkish and Arabic. The following extracts are from his poem 'Invitation':

Ask History about us.  
She remembers dashing Circassians,  
She will tell how once in olden times  
Chestnut horses galloped and steel jingled.

Ask the sun and the dawn.  
But you'd better see yourself—  
Better to see once than hear a hundred times.  
Just come and be a welcome guest.

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<sup>22</sup> The definitive collection of Ch'ischoqwe's works (in Circassian) is available on <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-literature.php>>.



Yis-heq Meshbash's (Meshbesch'e) name is synonymous with Adigean literature.

Other important writers included Tembot Kerashev, receiver of the Stalin Prize of the First Order. His first work «АРКЪ» (*Arq*) ('Vodka') came out in Krasnodar in 1925. It was written in Arabic script. He wrote many historical tales and three novels, *The Tempest*, *The Road to Happiness* (1932), which was translated into Russian in 1948, and *Lonely Rider*, also translated into Russian. Akhmad Hatko (Ahmed Hatqwe), born in 1902, composed chants and historical novels. He received the Olympic Prize of the North Caucasus for National Culture in 1935.

Khusain B. Andrukhaev, a distinguished poet who was killed in action in the World War II, was dubbed 'Hero of the Soviet Union.' The story of his life *Read My Life* was published in Maikop in 1984. Ahmedx'an Nalo penned the novel *Dawn Rider*. Askerbi Shortan wrote a



biographical account of Zhebaghi Qezenoqwe, the 18th century statesman and sage. The classic historical epic 'Khimsad,' set in the Caucasian War period, was written by B. Koble, who was born in 1902.

Although literary criticism was developed and formalized in the modern era, tradition has it that when a bard finished a commissioned song, he presented his work to a jury of minstrels, which had to approve it for release. Oftentimes the work was sent back for revision. In this manner, literary standards were kept which ensured that only works of merit were produced. The most influential critic of recent years is Muserbiy Soqwr (Сокъур Мусэрбий). According to Boris Qaghirmes (Къагъырмэс Борис), 'his diligent work, which spanned almost 40 years, brought good form to many aspects of modern Circassian literature.'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See '*Waschhemaxwe*, no. 3, 1992, p109.

## Literary Journals

The literary and cultural almanac *Qeberdey* («Къэбэрдей»; 'Kabarda') was the organ of the Union of Soviet Writers of Kabarda. It was published in Nalchik starting from 1948 in Kabardian. The most prestigious and influential literary journal is *'Waschhemaxwe* («Йуашхьэмахуэ»; Mount Elbrus), published by the Union of the Writers of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR. The first issue of the monthly came out in 1958. The journal also deals with historical and artistic matters. Since 1991, it has been published by the Union of the Circassian Writers of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic once every two months. Less than 3,000 copies of each edition of the Journal are published. Thenceforth, taboo subjects were forcefully breached. *Literary Kabardino-Balkaria* was the Russian language organ of the Union. All these journals, *Nur* included, were subsidized by the government. All writers were members in the Union and were paid salaries.



The emblem of the *'Waschhemaxwe* («Йуашхьэмахуэ»; Mount Elbrus) Journal. The spread of literacy in Circassian amongst the diaspora Circassians would boost the circulation of the literary outputs in the Caucasus.

In Adigea, «Зэкъошныгъ» (*Zeqweshnigh*) [Friendship] and its Russian version *Druzhba*, are the literary almanacs of the Adigean branch of the Union of Soviet Writers Adignatsizdat. They were first issued in Maikop in 1946. These Journals broach literary, artistic, political and social

subject matters and issues. About a thousand copies of each edition of the quarterly *Zeqweshnigh* are published. Another journal published by the Union is *Literaturnaya Adigeya* ('Literary Adigea').



Svetlana Skhaplok and Kazbek Khut, editors at the Adigean Book Press.  
In the post-Soviet era literature has become mostly a labour of love.  
(Z. Khuako, 1998, p45).

### **Translations**

Many works of literature were translated from Circassian to Russian, and vice versa. Few literary products were rendered into Western European languages. Some of these were issued by the local publishing houses, like 'Elbrus' in Nalchik. Works from Circassian to Russian include *Molodie zhuravli* ('Young Crane'), by Beit'al Kwesh, in 1972, *The Pear-tree in Bloom*, Moscow, 1973, and *Invitation*, Nalchik, 1973, by Petr Misache.

Many works of Circassian writers, including Meshbash, Kerashev, Hex'wpassh'e, Teiwine, Adem Schojents'ik'w and Hedeghel'e, were also translated to Turkish and published. The journal *Kavkaz*, which is published in Ankara, devoted much space to Circassian literature.

The first instances of translation of Russian literature into Circassian were evinced in the middle of the 19th century. One of the earliest translators was Kazi Atazhukin, who rendered a few works by Lermontov into Kabardian. In the Soviet period, most of the works of the major Russian writers were translated to Kabardian and Adigean. In addition, Marxist literature was painstakingly rendered into the languages of the 'newly-lettered' peoples. Translations into Western European languages were very few.

### **Publishing Houses**

When Nogmov wrote his pioneering works, he had to petition Russian authorities to publish them. In fact, he died before he saw any of his works in print. His first book on Adiga history saw the light in 1861 thanks to the efforts of his son Arostan, who published it in Pyatigorsk. Five years later Bergé, in acknowledgement of its epic qualities, translated it to German and published it in Leipzig. This might have been the first work by a Circassian to be translated into a Western European language.

During the tsarist period literary works were published in Russian press-houses, as there were still no local ones in Circassia. The first local publishing houses were established in the Soviet era. Elbrus Book Printing House played a major role in publishing many of the works of the local writers, both in Circassian and Russian. Many books in Russian and English were published in Moscow.

In Adigea the publishing centre was first in Ekaterinodar (later Krasnodar), then it moved to Maikop as it became the political and cultural capital of the republic. Since 1918, the state publishing house, in its various nominal designations, has put out more than 3,000 book titles, mainly in Circassian and Russian. This excludes some works published in Moscow and St Petersburg. In 1998, Professor Zawir Khuako published a seminal work on the history of publishing in Adigea with a complete list of books published therein. In the last years of the 1990s, the Meoty Publishing House came into existence. It specializes in issuing works on Circassian language and culture, having the apt name of the ancestors of the Adiga.

The number of publications in Adigea dropped dramatically starting in 1995. From almost 60 in 1994, it went down to 28 in 1995, ten in 1996, nine in 1997! It would seem that bad times had caught up with the literary world.

## Post-Soviet Literature

Although the breakdown of the Soviet Union was a sharp departure from the past, there was already some shift away from the bleak ambience of Communist ideology at the end of the 1980s. However, the clean break of 1991 allowed literary workers to throw away the remnants of the straitjacket. Writers began to reappraise the Soviet period and started to question some of the events of the time. They also lamented the neglect of Circassian culture. Many of the established edifices of the period were taken down, much like when the statue of Lenin which ‘adorned’ the main square of Nalchik was ceremoniously removed to oblivion. One negative aspect was that the Union and its members were left to fend for their own. The subsidy system was scrapped. Market forces became important factors in shaping the literary life.

A poem published in 1992 had a young man having a tête-à-tête with History and confronting him with the dark fate of his people:

‘I have been in this life for a score years,  
Yet, not a single blessing have I enjoyed.  
My Lord!<sup>24</sup> I sacrifice my life to you,  
If only you have mercy upon my people.’

...

The beautiful green tree of the Ubykh,  
Was washed away by the flooding Sea,  
Freedom in Circassia ended,  
It was lost without a trace.

«Сэ сызэрыхъур ильэс тЮщІщ,  
Ауэ фІы гуэр си нобэм хэлькъым.  
Къурмэн си гъащІэр уэ пхузощІ,  
ГущІэгъу къыхуэщІи уэ си лъэпкъым».

...

Жыг щхъуантІэ дахэу шыта Убыхри

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<sup>24</sup> Addressed to the Circassian supreme god Theshxwe.

Хыр зыщІауауэ псым ихьыжаш,  
Щхьэхуитыныгъэр Хэкум шиухри  
Ар лъэужьыншэу хэкІуэдэжаш.

History has this to say in his own defense:

My secret is made so by man,  
I am abused as a place where secrets are hid.

Your good and bad I preserve for posterity.  
My records are yours, not only mine to keep.  
For the queries you have for me,  
I am ready to give you truthful answers.

— Сэ си щэхур цІыхурщ щэху зыщІыжыр,  
Сэ сыви́гъэпщкІупІау аркъудейщ.

ФІыми Іейми, фэ влэжьар сотхыжыр,  
Ар фэращ — сэракъым псори зейр.  
УпщІау уэ къызэптым и жэуапыр  
Пэжу уэстыжыну сыхьэзырщ...

The two protagonists part as the poet comes to terms with his past.

A heart-rending and sobering encounter it was, but it just failed to name the culprit. Written by Hesen Qwedzoqwe (1992), 'The Poet and History' became very popular. It was dramatized and shown on TV (shot and directed by Mohy Quandour). Videotapes were distributed in the diaspora.

The spirit of the new age was succinctly comprehended by Boris Qaghirmes writing in *'Waschhemaxwe* (no. 3, 1992, p111), now the organ of purely Circassian writers, as opposed to being a joint Kabardian and Balkar venture:

Circassian literature is a branch of world literature—let us never forget this! We must endeavour to enter the international stage with our literary products. True, this is heavy load. But who said that the yoke on our shoulders should be lightened?! Rather than win the easy battle, it is better to struggle eternally against the seemingly impossible: if you prevail, the mark is forever etched; otherwise—no shame in coming second to a colossus!

Адыгэ литературэр дунейпсо литературэм и зы кьудамэу зэрыщытыр зэи зыщыдгъэгъупщэ хьунукъым. Дэри дыхущIэкъун хуейщ дунейпсо утыку ихьэфын тхыгъэхэр ди кьалэмым кьыщIэкIыным. Пэжщ, ар кьалэнышхуэщ, ауэ хэт жызыIар тхакIуэм зыхуигъэувыжын хуейр нэхъ кьалэн цыкIухэр арауэ?! ЦыкIум утекIуэ нэхърэ, иным махуэ кьэс уезауэмэ нэхьыфIщ: утекIуэмэ — уи насыпщ, кьыптекIуэмэ — иныращ кьыптекIуар!

Although this is positive thinking at its best and a reflection of the new optimism, one cannot help but suspect that there is a fundamental point that keeps being missed. Veritable literary masterpieces were penned before, during, and after Soviet times, starting with the colossal corpus of the Nart tales and ancient epic songs and compositions, to the liberating and animating post-Soviet literature. The challenge is not in the production, but rather in the presentation of these products to world readership. In the West, considerable investment is made to make the works of its talented writers accessible in different languages. In the same manner, a number of outstanding works in Circassian could be rendered into world languages at the highest of standards, published and distributed with the support of the machineries of government and literary institutions in the Circassian republics. It is then up to international readers to pronounce their judgements.

Qaghirmes is best known for his short tales, such as ‘The Needle and the Button’ and ‘The Letter which Came to the Village.’ Asked by a friend



why he chose this genre, he said, 'Why does a person choose the short way?' The minuscule 'Missed Life' is presented here (*ИУАЦХБЭМАХУЭ*. 'Waschhemaxwe, no. 4, 1992, pp 15-16):

### **Missed Life**

Barely finishing fifth grade, she forfeited learning and chose instead to sell apples from her tree-garden in the bazaar to help her folks. She did justice to herself and became a bazaar (bizarre) person. Then she engaged in speculation. Now you cannot get her to leave the place.

Time of marriage arrived, the suitor cannot find her.  
'Where is she?'  
'In the market.'  
'Keep her there forever!' he said, and married another.  
Days went by, her youth withered.  
Old Age came for her: 'Where is she?'  
'In the bazaar.'  
He went and made (painted) her old.  
Though decrepit and hoary, she never quit her work.  
Then (in due time) Death asked, 'Where is she?'  
'In the bazaar.'  
Is there escaping the Grim Reaper?!  
He went and claimed her soul.  
'The poor thing is dead!' it was said.  
'Where is her body?'  
'It is lying in the bazaar ...'

### **ГЪАЦІЭР ЗЫІЭЦІЭКИА**

Абы, хьыджэбз цыкIуу, етхуанэ классыр кьиуха кьудейуэ, еджэныр хыфIидзэри бэзэр Iуэхум зритауэ щытащ. Жыг хадэ яIэти, мыIэрысэ ищэрт. Унагьуэм сэбэп хуэхьурт, езыми зихуэпэжырт. Апхуэдэурэ ар

хъуаш бэээр цыху. ИужькIэ хыхьат сондэджэрынми.  
Иджы ар бэээрым кытекIыжиххэртэкъым.

И шэгъуэр кьосри, кыльыхъу щIалэм  
кыгъуэтыркъым. «Дэнэ шыIэ?» — «Бэээрым тесщ». —  
«Трырес-тIэ быдэу», — жеIэри нэгъуэщI кьешэ.

Апхуэдэу бэээрым тес зэпытурэ, и щIалэгъуэр  
йокI.

Жьыгъэр кыхуокIуэ: «Дэнэ шыIэ мыр?» —  
«Бэээрым тесщ». МакIуэ, кьегъуэтри жьы ещI.

Ауэ, жьы зэрыхъуауи, и Iуэхур кыгъанэртэкъым  
абы.

Иужьу кыщIоупщIэ ажалыр: «Дэнэ шыIэ?» —  
«Бэээрым тесщ». Ажалыр пфIэкIын?! МакIуэри и псэр  
хех.

«ТхъэмышкIэр лIащ!» — мэIу хьыбар.

«Дэнэ шыIэ и хьэдэр?»

«Бэээрым тельщ...»

The new generation of Circassian writers and poets is well represented by Dr. Luba Belaghi (Бэлагы Любэ), who is working diligently to bridge the gap between the Circassian writers in the Caucasus and the outside world. She has published a number of books in Circassian Russian and English.<sup>25</sup>

### **Islamic & Diaspora**

The *mawlid*, or *mevlid* in Turkish, a celebration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad, is one of the most important genres of Islamic literature. It has flourished among the Circassians in the diaspora in consequence of their contact with the host peoples in the Middle East. A specimen of a Shapsugh hymn, about 1,000 lines long, is presented. It was written, edited and printed by Circassians in the early part of the 20th century and part of it was translated by Rieks Smeets (1980):

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<sup>25</sup> 'Let there be light!' (ГЪЭУНЭХУПШЭ) (Nalchik, 2008) is available on line at <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-literature.php>>, courtesy of the author.

(1) Day and night she kept crying, (2) Crying, she made heaven and earth cry, (3) Reaching for neither food nor drink, she stayed there, (4) She became like drunk, not knowing herself anymore. (5) And she said: '*Wa hasreta, wa firqeta*, (6) What will I do with myself, oh, my father, *wa firqeta*?' (7) She said: 'Wherever he went, oh, melancholy, (8) Wherever he dwelled, my beautiful father, our prophet, (9) He always took mercy upon us, (10) He always guided us to the straight path.'

The following quatrain is representative of Circassian traditional poetry in Turkey:<sup>26</sup>

1. Хышхуэу лъагъуныгъэр къегъагуэу бэгауэ,  
 [*Xishxwew lhaghwnigher qeigha 'wew begawe*,]  
 2. Си гур кхъуэфэжьейуэ кырехукI,  
 [*Siy gwr q 'wefezcheywe qireixwch*'],  
 3. Дуней сызытетым симыгъэбэяуэ,  
 [*Duney siziteitim siymighebeyawe*,]  
 4. Уэ сызырыпщыщIэр кызэукI.  
 [*We siziripschisch 'er qizewich*']

Love, like a great ocean which roars and swells,  
 Tosses here and there my heart as if it were a small boat,  
 While nothing in the world can appease me,  
 I miss you, and this torments me.

Very few of the writers in the Diaspora use Circassian in their literary writings, the majority using local or Western European languages. The small number of texts in Circassian usually consists of short poems on

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<sup>26</sup> See E. Provasi, 1982, p171.

the theme of a lost homeland. Among writers of this genre are Yizdin Stash, some of whose works were published in *Lenin Path*, Fuad Dighwzch, now back in the Caucasus, Nadia Herbiy (X'wnegw), many of whose poems were published in journals and magazines in the Caucasus.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the following stanza captures the nostalgia evoked by this genre:

I saw many a sea and towns innumerable  
On my journeys overseas!  
But now, I tell you this:  
I would rather spend one freezing day  
In the fatherland  
Than a hundred springs in a foreign land.

No account of émigré literature is complete without citing one of the works of Csaban (Gebelli). It is difficult to choose a sample given his large output, but on account of its emotional intensity 'Song of the Caucasus' has become a classic:

Our Caucasus is a mirror of the world,  
It is the depository of our soul.  
Mount Kazbek and 'Waschhemaxwe,  
Like the moon in heaven, cast their lights upon us.

Дунеишхуэм ишхьу ди Кавказу,  
Ди псэм хуэдэу,  
Казбек Гуашхьи Гуашхьэмахуи,  
Уафэгу мазэу кьытшытопсэ.

There have been a large number of diaspora writers. The first Ottoman novelist, Ahmed Midhat (1844-1913), was a Circassian from the family Pshechech. Tewfik Fikret (1867-1915), who is considered as the father of modern Turkish poetry, penned many works, the best of which are included in his anthology *The Broken Lyre*. Abd al-Haq Hamid

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, *The Word Heals: Poems and Short Stories*, Maikop, 1992.

composed a poem on the great exodus, in which his mother was obliged to resettle in Turkey. Nazim Qarden published a collection of Nart tales in Arabic in 1977.<sup>28</sup> *The Kavkas Trilogy* published in 1994 by Dr. M. I. Quandour is an epic tale in English that tells the story of three Caucasian generations spanning the periods before, of, and after the Russian conquest. Quandour is considered one of the most prolific diaspora writers of recent times. Kadir I. Natho, who is based in the United States, has published novels in English using Circassian themes. His *Old and New Tales of the Caucasus* purports to convey Circassian history from ancient times to World War II in short story form, and *Nicholas and Nadiusha* is probably the first novel of a Circassian author in English.



Mohy Quandour in the Circassian Charity Association in Amman (second from left).

The prolific 'renaissance man' has authored many books on Circassian themes.

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<sup>28</sup> Qarden, N., *From Circassian Legends: Nart Sosriqwe*, Amman: The Circassian Charity Association, 1977. [In Arabic]

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## АДЫГЭ ТЕАТР: ХЭЗЫГЪЭГЪУАЗЭ

### Circassian Theatre: A Brief Introduction

One of the first instances of dialogue in Circassian literature is in the ancient tale ‘The Elegy of the Maid who Refused to Marry her Brother’ («Дэльхум дэКӀуэн зымыда хъыджэбзым и уэрэдыр») which gives us a glimpse of those far away days when incest was not yet tabooed. The poor girl begs the members of her family in turn to let her inside the house. Such stories are considered the forerunners of Circassian drama.

— А си анэ дыщэурэ,  
А си дыщэ пльыжь,  
Мы бжэр нысхуӀупхыркъэ,  
ЩыӀэм сегьалӀэри.

— My dearest Mother,  
Radiant as red gilt!  
I beseech you: Open this door.  
The chill is killing me.

— Си гуашэжьыр жыӀэтэмэ,  
mother-in-law,  
НыпхуӀусхынт.

— If you would just call me  
I would open it for you.

— Си псэ тӀэкӀур пытурэ  
Дауэ пхужысӀэн.

— How can I call you thus,  
Whilst there is still life in my bones.

In the introduction to Z. Qardenghwsch’s work *Circassian Tales* (1963), the Circassian writer and researcher Askerbi Shorten (Шортэн Аскэрбий) maintains that this text occupies a very special place not only in Circassian tradition, but also in human social development. Incest was abandoned a very long time ago by mankind, and this elegy provides us with a vestige of those far away days when this practice was not yet tabooed.

Modern theatre and drama as an independent genre saw the light in the early Soviet era. As in other literary genres, early dramatists had a rich tradition to fall back on. Light themes extracted from oral tales, such as jokes, situation comedies, satire, short stories and fables were used very

extensively at first. Even today, very few playwrights fail to take scoops out of the ancient treasure chest for adornment and even for themes.

Theatrical societies were set up in the 1920s. However, faceless bureaucrats in the Ministry of Culture of the USSR soon assumed the reins of the theatre movement and regulated all theatrical activities in accordance with Party dogma. Although Circassian theatre developed enormously in a short time, a plateau was soon reached. The creative process was stifled and experimentation and broaching of some themes were not allowed.

One of the most influential and popular figures in Circassian theatre was Ibrahim Tsey (1895-1936), who studied law and became famous as a writer of legendary tales and plays. Many of his fables were collected and published.<sup>29</sup> He was a great patriot and dedicated his life to the dissemination of Circassian culture, organising the Adigean National Theatre Institute and the drama theatre in Ekaterinodar in 1929.

Another important dramatist was Kuba Csaban (Gebelli), who taught Circassian literature in the Drama Institute in the Adigean Autonomous Region in the 1920s and 30s. He penned many plays like *The Night Raid on Kabarda* («Къэбэрдей жэштеуэ»),<sup>30</sup> which tells of a Russian

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<sup>29</sup> Dumézil, G. and Namitok, A., *Fables de Tsey Ibrahim (tcherkesse occidentale)*, Paris, 1939.

<sup>30</sup> Angered by the continued expansionist policy pursued by Russia into their country, despite persistent protestations, the Kabardians resolved in the spring of 1779 to rid their country of Russian presence and undo the Russian fortresses that had been constructed in the northern parts of their territory. The Circassians mobilized their forces and began to fight back against Russian expansion. In response, Empress Catherine II instructed the Governor General of Astrakhan, Prince Potemkin, to pacify Kabarda by fair means or foul. General Jacoby was given his marching orders. He conducted an offensive in Kabarda, which lasted all summer. After the arrival of fresh enforcements from Russia, the expedition succeeded in penetrating deep into Kabardian lands. At the end of September 1779, a fierce battle was fought in which the Kabardian force, taken unawares, was massacred. About fifty princes and more than 350 noblemen were killed, a huge toll by the reckoning of those days. Dubbed 'Qeberdey Zheschteiwe' ('Kabardian Night Assault'), the battle marked one of

nocturnal attack of Kabarda in the 18th century, and *Yistambilak'we* (Истамбылак'уэ; 'The Great Exodus') on the forceful expulsion of the Northwest Caucasians. In Jordan, he directed and produced some of his plays, which were staged at cinema theatres with casts of enthusiastic volunteers. The public was entranced by the shows performed in the mother tongue.

The poet and dramatist Pschiqan Dzado Shejehesch'e (ШэджэхъэщІэ Дзэдзу и къуэ Пщыкъан; 1879-1937) and writer and playwright Zhansex'w Mirzebech Nalo(ev) (Нало Мырзэбэч и къуэ Жансэхъу; 1906-1937) wrote the tragedy of *Korgat*, which was staged at the Nalchik Theatre in 1934. The former engaged in anti-religious rhetoric directed mainly at mullahs. The latter, who was the first president of the Kabardino-Balkarian Branch of the Union of Writers of the USSR, was persecuted in the Stalin purges. He was arrested in the summer of 1936 and executed in 1937, but was rehabilitated posthumously in 1957.

The writer and dramatist Askerbiy T. Shorten (Шортэн Аскэрбий; 1916-1985; Honoured Art Worker of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR and Honoured Art Worker of the Russian SSR) published *The Theatrical Art of Kabardino-Balkaria* on the history and development of Kabardian drama and theatre in Nalchik in 1961.<sup>31</sup> Born in Kabarda in the village of Leskan II in 1916, he wrote many plays, for some of which the music was written by Arseni M. Abraamov and Truvor K. Sheibler, two of the most influential composers in Kabarda in the first half of the 20th century. In 1940, Abraamov wrote *Batir Village* (Аул Батыр), an

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the bleakest days in Kabardian history. The war is referred to by the Kabardians as 'Meziybl Zawe' («Мэзибл зауэ»; 'The Seven-Month War') or 'Qwrey Zawe' («Къурей зауэ»; 'The Qwrey War'), the place where it all took place. By December, the Kabardian princes were defeated and the northern frontier of Kabarda retracted to the rivers Balhq (Malka) and Terch (Terek). An audio recording of a song (sung by Ziramikw Qardenghwsch') on the battle of the same name is available on this webpage.

<sup>31</sup> Shorten's historical novel *Bgirisxer* [«БГЫРЫСХЭР»; *The Mountaineers*] (Nalchik, 1954; Russian translation appeared in 1967) is considered as one of the masterpieces of modern Circassian literature.

overture for symphony orchestra based on Shorten's famous play of the same name (staged in 1939), and Sheibler for *Qanschobiy and Gwascheghagh* («Къанщобийрэ Гуашэгъагърэ») and *For Ever* (staged in 1957). Muhedin F'. Bale (Балэ Мухъэдин) based his symphonic suite *Qizbrun* («Къызбрун»; 1959) on Zalimx'an Aqsire's play of the same name (written in 1954; on the tragic fate of a Kabardian woman in feudal times) performed by the Kabardian Theatre Group. Other works include *Picture, Some Household*, and *When the Light Is On* (written in 1947; on life in a kolkhoz farm; Russian translation in 1950).

Hesen Qwedzoqwe's (Къуэдзокъуэ Хъэсэн) very popular poem 'The Poet and History' («УСАКИУЭМРЭ ТХЫДЭМРЭ») (1992) was dramatized and shown on TV (shot and directed by Dr. Mohy Quandour).<sup>32</sup>



Hesen Qwedzoqwe, Circassian poet.

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<sup>32</sup> An audio recording of the drama is available on this website.

## Theatre companies & drama groups

The Drama Theatre in Kabardino-Balkaria was established in the early 1920s, with two national companies, one for the Kabardians, the other for the Balkars. In the mid-1950s, the Kabardian National Theatre staged *The Song of Daxenaghwe*, which, according to Maria Menapece, 'is an outstanding drama in verse which draws its themes from Circassia's most ancient heroic epos ... Its rare artistic qualities ... place it on a level with ... Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die versunkene Glocke*, or Maeterlinck's *L'Oiseau Bleu*.'<sup>33</sup> Written by Zalimx'an A. Aqsire (Акъсырэ Залымхъан; Aksirov; b. 1919) in 1942, *Daxenaghwe* («ДАХЭНАГЪУЭ»; name of the heroine; literally: 'Brown-eyed Beauty') was kept in the repertoire of the Theatre for a long time due to its popularity.<sup>34</sup> It was devoid of Communist dogma, which corrupted many plays of the time, like *The Testing* by Hechiym Teiwine (Теунэ Исхъэкъ и къуэ Хъэчим; 1912-1983), and Shorten's *When the Light Is On*. Other plays by Aqsire include *Lashin* (Лашын), which was written in 1946 on the theme of the well-known Nart heroine.

The Kabardian State Drama Theatre (in the Name of Aliy Schojents'ik'w) staged many works of local and Soviet writers, including Biberd Zhurt's *If the Head Is Abed, Woe unto the Feet* («ЩХЪЭМ ИМЫТМЭ, ЛЪАКЪУЭМ И МЫГЪУАГЪЭЩ»; *Schhem Yimitme, Lhaqwem yi Mighwaghesh*), which was staged in 1972. Outstanding actors of the Theatre Company included Vladimir Yiwan (Иуан Владимир), Valera Balhqiz (Балькъыз Валерэ), and K'wne Zchach'emix'w (ЖъакIэмыхъу КIунэ).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> 'Review of *Soviet Kabardian Dramaturgy*, Moscow, 1957 (214 pages)', by Maria Menapece in *Caucasian Review*, Munich, no. 9, 1959, pp 139-44. {The following works are discussed: 1) *The Song of Dakhanago [Daxenaghwe]*, Zalimkhan Aksirov (Акъсырэ Залымхъан); 2) *The Testing*, Khachim Teunov (Теунэ Хъэчим); 3) *When the Light Comes On* [sic], A. Shortanov (Шортэн Аскэрбий)}

<sup>34</sup> The Circassian classical musician Vladimir Mole (b. 1940) wrote the opera *Daxenaghwe* (Дакхэнагъуэ) in 1969 based on Zalimx'an Aqsire's play.

<sup>35</sup> Website (only in Russian) of the Kabardian State Drama Theatre is found at: <[http://stdkbr.by.ru/kab\\_main.html](http://stdkbr.by.ru/kab_main.html)>.

The National Theatre in Bakhsan in Kabardino-Balkaria staged many works of Circassian and other North Caucasian playwrights. In addition, classical works were produced, like Molière's splendid comedy *Le Malade imaginaire* in 1974 [rendered «ЗАЛЫМЫГЪЭКІЭ ЯГЪЭІЭЗЭ» (*Zalimighech'e Yaghe'eze*) in Circassian]. The company's amateur actors included Beit'al Вах'we (Бахъуэ БетІал), who is also an accomplished poet, Fat'iymet Mereimiqwe (Мэремыкъуэ ФатІимэт), Muse Qebarde (Къэбардэ Мусэ), He'iyshet Ghwch'e (ГъукІэ Хъэишэт), Sufyan Nemdex'w (Хъэмдэхъу Суфян), Nemiymbiy Vzenich'e (БжэныкІэ Хъэмидбий), and Lyuba Abdoqwe (Абдокъуэ Любэ). There is a memorial plaque in the theatre for the actors who fell in World War II, including A. Ghwo (Гъуо), S. Qenemghwet (Къэнэмгъуэт), Q. Shibzix'we (Шыбзыхъуэ), S. Nartizch (Нартыжь), T. Qambiy (Къамбий), Q. Qereghwl (Къэрэгъул), and not forgetting Hetu Teimirqan (Темыркъан Хъэту; Temirkanov), President of the Art Directorate in Kabarda at the time.

The Adigean State Drama Theatre was established in Adigea in 1937. It has a Circassian section that stages plays in the Circassian language.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> More information (in Russian) on the Adigean State Drama Theatre can be found at: <<http://www.mkra.ru/iskusstvo.php>>.



The Adigean State Drama Theatre

One of the popular themes in Soviet times was the heroism of Andeimirqan.<sup>37</sup> The Circassian Robin Hood was used as a symbol of the struggle between the legions of darkness, in this case the aristocracy, and the advocates of light. The first writer to use the motif was M. Qaniqwey (Къаныкъуей). However, his work was deemed as being unworthy of publishing by the Union of Writers, and the manuscript was lost during

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<sup>37</sup> Andeimirqan (b. circa 1509), the equivalent of Robin Hood in the Circassian ethos, was a contemporary of the 16th-century potentate Prince Beislhen (Beslan) (son of Zhanx'wet), nicknamed 'Pts'apts'e' ('The Obese'), who is credited with modifying the structure of the peerage system and updating the *Xabze*. Andeimirqan was the progeny of a *mésalliance*; his father was a prince, his mother was of unknown stock. According to one legend, he was found by Andeimir while on a hunting expedition. When his hound barked at the trunk of a tree, he wondered what the matter was, only to find a twig-basket perched on a forked branch. He brought it down and found a tiny baby covered in the basket. Andeimir, who was childless, was joyful at the find, and he brought up the child as his own. Andeimirqan grew up to be an intrepid horseman. The news of his exploits went far and wide. He was in the entourage of Prince Beislhen, and one day while the potentate was on a hunting expedition – carted in a carriage, as the Prince was too large to fit on a horse – the Prince took aim at a wild boar, but missed the mark, and the boar fled into the forest. As the boar was driven out of the forest, the Prince took another aim, but missed again. However, Andeimirqan's arrow pierced the boar and stuck him to the Prince's carriage. By some accounts, it was there and then that Beislhen resolved to get rid of Andeimirqan. He instigated Qaniybolet, one of Andeimirqan's closest friends and younger brother of Prince Temriuk Idarov, to betray him. One day, Qaniybolet asked Andeimirqan to go out with him on a hunting expedition. A contingent of Beislhen's troops lay in ambush, and they put the hero to the sword. Some analysts maintain that the murder was a result of the internecine war for supremacy over Kabarda, as Andeimirqan, despite the obscurity of his mother's lineage, could have claimed the mantle of sovereignty for his warrior character and bravery. It is thought that Andeimirqan was killed before 1552. He was Christian. At the time, the Circassians venerated Dawischjerjiy (St. George) and Yele (Prophet, or St. Elijah), in addition to their pagan gods. It was Beislhen Pts'apts'e's son Prince Qaniqwe who left Kabarda (in the second half of the 16th century) to establish the Beislheney (Beslanay) nation-tribe. A full account of Andeimirqan, his exploits and murder can be found in Z. Qardenghwsch', 1969 (1970), pp 223-336.



World War II. In the 1930s, Abdul Pschinqwe wrote the play *Andeimirqan*.<sup>38</sup> In 1974, Zalimx'an Aqsire wrote a play of the same title in verse relying on tested historical and oral styles. He also made use of a narrator (IуэтэжакIуэ; 'wetezhak'we).

Among famous actors were X'wsain Toqwiу (Токъуий Хъусайн) who portrayed Qazbek, Romeo, and Jeriymes (Джэримэс) [from Aqsire's play *Daxenaghwe*],<sup>39</sup> Muhediyn Sekrek (Сэкрэк Мухъэдин), and Beshiyr Shibzix'we (Шыбзыхъуэ Бэшир), who played a mean Demon in Pushkin's classic *The Demon*. In 1992-1993, Hebas Beishtoqwe (Бештокъуэ Хъэбас) translated and published King Lear in the literary journal '*Waschhemaxwe* (Iуашхъэмахуэ).

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<sup>38</sup> The identity of the playwright of this play is in dispute. There were two writers bearing the surname Pschinqwe in the 1930s.: Abdul and Mechre'iyl. In his *Today's Kabardian Soviet Prose*, L. Qeshezh (Къэшэж) cited the work as having two joint writers: Mechre'iyl and A. Bole (Болэ; Bolaev).

<sup>39</sup> An audio recording of 'Jeriymes's Aria' from Vladimir Mole's opera *Daxenaghwe* by Vladimir Bereghwn is available on this webpage.

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## БЭЛАГЪЫ ЛЮБЭ И УСЭХЭР

### The Poetry of Luba Belaghi

#### *АДЫГЭБЗЭР КЪЫХЫДОХ....*

Псалгэ куэди зэхыдох,  
ГъащIэ куэдми дыходэ,  
НэгъуэщIыбзэ куэди додэ,  
Адыгэбзэр къыхыдох.

Си бзэ шабэ бампIэдэх,  
Уэ сэ си бгъэм укыщикIкIэ,  
Сэ зым нэхъ сымынэхъ икIэ,  
Къалэ миным уздызохъ.

Си бгъэм уилъу сыкъэхъуат,  
Си гъуэгу гъащIэр щызублэнум,  
ТхьэлъэIуальэу уэ си анэм,  
Хьэкъыу укыспщIэхильхьат.

Абы лъандэм гъэи текIаи,  
ЗытеIэбэхэр игъэгъуу,  
Мис, си анэми а жыгъэр,  
И IэльощIым къыщIэщай.

Нэпс къудамэр гум къыщокI,  
Нэхъыбэжщ къомыгъэувыIэр,  
Узыпэмылгъэщым уи Iэр  
КIэлыпшийуэ пIэпыщIокI...

Абы кIуам къимыгъээзж...  
Къэзыгъээзжам уимыщIэ,  
Бзэри тыгъэ Щэхуц – мээш,  
КъикIыр ди бзэм зи къэдмыщIэ!...

КъэтщIэщэнууи дыпымыль,  
Щэхуи-нахуи къэдмылгыхъуэ! ...  
Бзэ зимыIэр кыдофыгъуэ...  
Бзэр зи тыгъэр кыткIэлъопль.

**АДЫГЭ МУХЪЭЖРИНХЭМ Я ГИМН**

ГъыбзэкIэ дыкыкIами,  
УэрэдкIэ нэдгъээжынуш,  
Ди лъэпкъым хэкIуэдыкIахэм  
Я уэсят лъапIэр нэтхынуш:

Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди хэкур тхуэхъумэ!

**The Hymn of the Circassian Emigrants**

We left the fatherland in laments,  
But we shall return singing joyful airs,  
Those of our nation who perished  
Their precious testament we shall carry back:

Our Mighty God, safeguard our fatherland!

<p>Дэ дыщыІэнущ адыгэу,  Ди лъэпкъыр нэхъри хэдгъахъуэу  Зыдужьыжынущ адыгэм  Лъэпкъышхуэ дунейр зыгъахъуэ!</p> <p>Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди жьэгур тхуэхъумэ!</p> <p>Хэкум дыныщырахум  Хышхуэм зэпырыклахэр  Ди псэм димыгъэгъуащэу  Хамэм дахэтыфащ!</p> <p>Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди хэкур тхуэхъумэ!</p> <p>Зыми дахуимыкІуэту,  Ди щхъэри яхуэдмыгъэщхъыу,  ХабзэкІэ дызыбгъэдэтхэм  Я пщІэри къэдлэжыфащ.</p> <p>Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди хэкур тхуэхъумэ!</p>	<p>We shall forever remain Circassian,  And our nation shall grow and thrive,  We shall take the road to glory,  And strive to become one of the great nations of this world!</p> <p>Our Great God, protect our hearth!<sup>40</sup></p> <p>Though expelled from the fatherland,  And sailing across the great seas,  We never lost possession of our soul  Living in foreign lands!</p> <p>Our Supreme God, save our fatherland!</p> <p>Never did we compromise,  Nor did we ever hold our head low,  For our precious customs and traditions  We have been able to earn great esteem.</p> <p>God Almighty, preserve our motherland!</p>
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<sup>40</sup> In Circassian (and in general North Caucasian) cosmology everything was held in place by the universal chain. The hearth-chain (жьэгу лъахъш; *zhegw lhax'sh*) was the household's link to the cosmos – the coupling to the universal scheme of things. Every home had a permanently lit hearth with a wrought iron chain hanging down the chimney. All native North Caucasian religions regard the family hearth with special reverence and it was the principal place at which family rituals were conducted, principally offerings and sacrifices and the rites associated with the cult of Dade (Weriydade; Дадэ; Уэридадэ), the clan hero, the head of the household, whose immortal soul transmigrated to *hedrixé* (хъэдрыхэ; the world beyond) after death. The patrons of the domestic hearth were the deities Sozeresh and Zhegwpathe (Жьэгупатхъэ; literally: God of the Hearth). A new bride was 'unchained' from her father's hearth and then 'joined' to that of her father-in-law in special circum-ambulatory ceremonies. Vestiges of the cult of Dade are come upon in the corpus of ceremonial songs collectively referred to as 'Weriydade', the most famous of which being the one chanted during the bridal homecoming. The hearth chain still retains symbolic functions and significance.

<p>Бзэуэ дызэрыпсалгэми, Пэдмыдзыхыжу анэбзэр, Мис, тхъумэфащи, ди пIальэщ Иджы ар еттыну ди быным.</p>	<p>The language that we speak, The mother tongue that we never forsook, Here, we were able to preserve, and its time for us Now to bestow it to our children.</p>
<p>Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди хэкур тхуэхъумэ!</p>	<p>Our Supreme God, protect our fatherland!</p>
<p>ГъыбзэкIэ дыкыкIами, УэрэджIэ нэдгъэзэжынуш, Ди льэпкъым хэкIуэдыкIахэм Я уэсят льапIэр нэсхынуш:</p>	<p>We emigrated in grief, But we shall return in joy, Those that our nation lost Their cherished last will we shall take back:</p>
<p>Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди льапсэр тхуэхъумэ!</p>	<p>Our Mighty Lord, safeguard our sacred domicile!</p>
<p>Дэ дыщыIэнуш адыгэу, Ди льэпкъыр нэхъри хэдгъахъуэу Зыдужыжынуш адыгэм Льэпкъышхуэ дунейр зыгъахъуэ!</p>	<p>We shall always be Circassian, And our nation shall grow and grow, We shall take the road to glory And become one of the notable nations of this world!</p>
<p>Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди жьэгур тхуэхъумэ!</p>	<p>Our Great God, safeguard our hearth!</p>
<p>Тэтынуш адыгэ хабзэр, Адыгэу дунейм тетыххэм, Зетхъэнуш ди адыгэбзэр Аращи дыщIадыгэр.</p>	<p>We shall raise our Circassian Etiquette aloft, All the Circassians across the globe, We shall nourish our Circassian language, And validate our reason for being.</p>
<p>Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди льапсэр тхуэхъумэ!</p>	<p>O Lord of Might, protect our ancestral land!</p>
<p>Ди адыгагъэ нэгъыщэм, ДыхигъэткIухъырккъым щIышхуэм, Дыхигъэгъуащэркъым цIыхуу Зэхэтым льэпкъ зэрызыххэу.</p>	<p>Our distinctive Circassianness We shall not allow to be dissolved in this vast world, Our unitary people Shall not be lost amongst other nations.</p>
<p>Ди Тхъэшхуэ, ди льапсэр тхуэхъумэ!</p>	<p>Our Mighty God, save our Old Country!</p>
<p>ГъыбзэкIэ дыкыкIами, УэрэджIэ нэдгъэзэжынуш, Ди льэпкъым хэкIуэдыкIахэм</p>	<p>We left the fatherland in laments, Yet we shall return in song, Those of our nation who perished</p>

<p>Я уэсят лъапIэр нэтхынуш:</p> <p>Ди Тхьэшхуэ, ди хэкур тхуэхьумэ!</p> <p>Дэ дышыIэнуш адыгэу,  Ди лъэпкъыр нэхъри хэдгъахьуэу  Зыдужьжынуш адыгэм  Лъэпкъышхуэ дунейр зыгъахьуэ!</p> <p>Ди Тхьэшхуэ, ди жьэгур тхуэхьумэ!</p>	<p>Their precious last will and testament we shall carry back:</p> <p>Our Supreme God, safeguard our country!</p> <p>We shall remain Circassian for ever and ay,  And our nation shall grow and grow,  We shall follow glory road,  And endeavour to be a great nation in this world!</p> <p>Our Great God, protect our hearth!</p>
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ЗезыдзэкIар: Жэмышьуэ Амджэд (Амышц)  
[Translated by Amjad Jaimoukha]

### **1864...**

Тхыдэм кыщыхуар иджыри зэ,  
Нэхъ гуащIэжу бгъэм кыщыкъутам, –  
Пэжмэ ар, уэрыжккым, зыпхуэжащ –  
УлIэри, кыпIукIэжакIэщ псэ!  
Сынохуапсэ абы щыгъуэм сэ...  
Си щхъэми, ди Тхъэ, сохуэпсэж.  
Тхыдэм кымылъхужыр, хэтми, псэжыщ,  
Псэ кIуэдащ.

Псэ пудщ.

Ар сытми псэ?!..

### ***ПСЕЙ ШЫХУФЭ***

Псей щыхуфэ, уэ си хэкум  
Урифэеплъ наIуэщ.  
Уэрэ сэрэ тIуми ди гур  
Ди лъапсэжкым хуолэ...  
Уогъэдахэ хамэ щыпIэр  
Хамэ щыгум уепIыр...  
Уиувами лыгъуэ - лыпIэ,  
Итыр зыщ уи натIэм!...  
Псей щыхуфэ, укыдофэ,  
Жыбгъэ пщытыр гуащIэм,  
Уэ уесатэккым уигъафIэу,  
Хэкуми игъащIэм.  
Тхыдэм хэкIэрахуэ жыбгъэм,  
Лыпсым и мэ кыххым,  
Зэхечатхъэ щэхуу уи бгъэр,  
Игъэуназэу уи щхъэр...  
Псей щыхуфэ, кыздэщыми,  
Сэ узыхэсщIэнущ,  
Уэри, сэри, хэкури – щыри  
Псэм дызэхуишэнущ.  
Ди гум щыщIэр зэIэпытхыу,



Щхьэж и гьуэгур занщIэу,  
Демыжьэжыу, ди Тхьэ - Тхьэшхуэ,  
Зы дыщIыж дэ – мащIэр...  
Псей щIыхуфэ, уэ си хэкум  
Урифэепль наIуэщ,  
Уэрэ сэрэ, тIуми ди гур  
Ди льяпсэжьым хуоIэ...

*Ордын, Iэмман, 1999*

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Убэным льяпкьыр икудащ...  
Фыгьуэным цIыхур текIуэдащ.  
Си хэкур гьэрщ, си хэкур гьэрщ...  
Гьэ куэд текIаш, мы блэкIри гьэщ...  
НэщIыбагь псалъэр хьуащ утыку...  
НапитI уиIэныр хьуакIэщ мыльку...  
Си хэку си хабзэр щезэшащ,  
Си анэм хуэдэу щэхуу тхьуащ...  
Зэрыгьу-зэрышхыр ди кьалэм?!  
Е ар зыIыгьым ди кьалэн  
ДызэдзакьэжIыу дыпсэун -  
Псэр дыукIын, псэр дыукIын?...

1998

### ***А СИ ДАДЭР – АР ЛЫЖЬ ХЕЙТ...***

А сэ си дадэр – ар лыжь хейт...  
Нэщхьейуэ мыхэр жиIэрейт:

«Фыгьуэр зи щIопщу гьуэгу техьам,  
Шым уанэ мыгьуэр трильхьащ...»

«Екудэ Iугьуэ фIейм дунейр –  
Убэным икудар нэхьейщ!...»

«Цыхухъум кIэ щимытIэгъэн,  
Бзылхугъэ хъунщхъэ - ар убэнщ!..»

«НэщIыбагъ псалъэм уедэIуам,  
Уохъу хуэфашщэпс ар зыIуэтам!...»

«НапитI зехъэныр пщыхъум мыльку –  
Узэрихъэфри арщ утыку!..»

А сэ си дадэр – ар лIыжь хейт...  
Абы и псалъэр зехъэгъуейт?!  
Си дадэм и псэр кыслъоIэс -  
ЗышыIэ, - жиIэу, - си хъыджэбз...

1999

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Дуней адыгэр къэскIухъащ,  
Хъэрыпми тыркуми сахэплъащ...  
Ахъей... Адыгэр дыкIуэдащ...  
Бзэншэ гъуэгу мыгъуэм дытехъащ...  
Усэ шынагъуэщ къэхъэсар:  
Дыпсэтепхъащ, дыжьэгугу сэхашщ...  
Дунейм адыгэу зы темыт,  
И бын кыильхуам бзэ хейр езыт...  
Бзэ мыгъуэ... си лъэпкъ щэху зэрыт,  
БлэкIаи къэкIуэни кыдэзыт,  
Си пащхъэм ит, си нитIым щIэт,  
Си кхъашхъэм шыхъуу ныщхъэщыт...

## **Бэлагы Любэ**

Бэлагы Любэ 1968 гэм Къармэхэблэ къуажэм къыщальхуаш. Мэзкуу къэрал университетым (МГУ им. Ломоносова) и щэныгъэр къыщыхъаш 1991 гэм литературэ редактору (журналист факультетым). Кандидат диссертаци («Адыгэ Хабзэр еджапIэхэм зэрхэлъхъа хъуну Iуэхугъуэхэр») 1994 гэм Мэзкуу Институт Лъэпкъ щэныгъэхэмкIэ щыIэм шигъээщIаш. Мы махуэхэм Дунейпсо Литературэхэм я Институтым (ИМЛИ им. Горького) и доктор диссертаци шегъэзащIэ. Мы гэммахуэм Мэзкуу ИМЛИ-м и дамэм щIэту Бэлагыым къыхудагъэкIыр «Дунейпсо Адыгэ Диаспорэм и литературэ» зыфицца къэхутэныгъэ тхылъыр.

ИпэкIэ усакIуэм и Iэдакъэм къыщIэкIаш усэ тхылъу: «Къудамэ закъуэ», 1992, Налшык; «Мывэ сэрей», 1997, Налшык; «Дыгъэм и гъуэгу», 2000, Налшык; «Молось я на адыгском языке...», 2002, Мэзкуу; усэбзэкIэ тхауэ роман «Гуашэнэ», 2005, Налшык; «Царская любовь», 2007, Мэзкуу; «ГъэунэхупIэ» - 2008гъ. Налшык. “Impress” WingSpan – 2008; «I Say My Prayers in Circassian» - WingSpan – 2008.

Диаспорэм ятха роман зыбжанэ Бэлагыым урысыбзэрэ адыгэбзэкIэ зыридзэкIауэ хэкум къыщыдигъэкIаш. Абы адыгэ литературэм теухуауэ тхыгъэ щэныкъуэм нэблагъэ адыгэбзэкIэ, урысыбзэкIэ, инглызыбзэкIэ, хъэрыпыбзэкIэ къыхудэкIахэш.

Бэлагыым 2000-рэ 2003-мрэ я зэхуаку къриубыдэу Литературэ Альманах «ЩIэпльыпэ» зыфицар бзищкIэ зэхэту (адыгэбзэ, урысыбзэ, инглызыбзэ) Налшык къыдэкIыгъуиплI къыщыдигъэкIаш.

Бэлагы Любэ 1997 гэм Дунейпсо ЩIалэгъуалэ ТхакIуэхэм и Япэ Дипломыр къратащ. 2007 гэм абы и роман «Гуашэнэр» Урысей ТхакIуэ Зэгуэтым (Мэзкуу къалэ) Къэралыгъуэ Премэ зыхуэгъэфэщапхъэу къалытащ.

Бэлагыыр Урысей къэралыгъуэм и ТхакIуэ Зэгуэтым хэтщ. Нобэ ар щопсэу Уиндзэр, Англие къэралыгъуэм, и щхъэгъусэмрэ и къуитIымрэ дэщIыгъуу.

### **Бэлагым адыгэбзэкIэ и Iэдакэм кыщIэкIа тхылъхэр:**

- КЪУДАМЭ ЗАКЪУЭ*, Эльбрус тхылъ тедзапIэ, 1992. [Усэ тхылъ]  
*МЫВЭ СЭРЕЙ*, Эльбрус тхылъ тедзапIэ, 1997. [Усэ тхылъ]  
*ДЫГЪЭМ И ГЪУЭГУ*, Эль-Фа тхылъ тедзапIэ, 2000. [поэмэ  
«Сатаней», усэхэр]  
*ГУАЩЭНЭ тхыдэ роман-поэмэ (Марие Темрыкъуэ и пхъумрэ Иуан  
БзаджащIэмрэ я тхыдэ 1561-1568)*, Налшык: Котляров М-рэ  
В-рэ я тхылъ тедзапIэ, 2005.  
*ГЪЭУНЭХУПIЭ*, Налшык: Котляров М-рэ В-рэ я тхылъ тедзапIэ,  
2008. [Усэ тхылъ]

### **Luba Belaghi**

Luba Balagova was born in 1968 in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria (the North Caucasus) of the Russian Federation. She finished her studies in literature and Journalism at the Moscow State University (named after Lomonosov) in 1991.

Balagova defended her First PhD (kandidatskaia) (“How to Implement Adiga Khabza in the National Educational Curriculum”) at the Moscow Institute of National Education in 1994. At the present time Balagova is completing her Second PhD in Literature “The Diaspora Literature of the Circassians” in the Institute of World Literature (IMLI) named after Gorky. This summer her monograph “Circassian Diaspora Literature” will be published by the IMLI Institute, Moscow.

Balagova published eight poetic books and a historical novel in poetry “Empress”. (“The Lonely Branch” – Nalchik (in Circassian), 1992; “The Stone Wall” - Nalchik (in Circassian), 1997; “The Way Of The Sun”, - Nalchik (in Circassian) – 2000; “Goshana” - Nalchik (in Circassian) – 2005; “I say my Prayers in Circassian”, Moscow (in Russian), 2000; “Tsar’s Love” Moscow (in Russian) – 2007; “Trials” - Nalchik (in Circassian), 2008; “I say my Prayers in Circassian”, WingSpan, USA – 2008; “Impress” WingSpan, USA – 2008.)

In 2000-2003 Balagova prepared and published in Nalchik with The Cherkess Fund Organization (as Chief Editor) a literary almanac “Horizon” (four issues) in three languages (Circassian, Russian and English).

Luba Balagova is a Poet Laureate and won First Prize of The Young Authors in 1997 (republic of Kabardino-Balkaria).

In 2008 Balagova’s “Impress” was announced in RF Union of Writers as “one of the greatest historical novels” and was collectively recommended for a literary prize.

Balagova is a member of the Russian Union of Writers. She currently lives in Windsor, England with her husband and two sons.

### **Belaghi’s publications in Circassian:**

- Belaghi, L., *Qwdame Zaqwe* [The Lonely Branch], Nalchik: Elbrus Book Press, 1992.
- *Mive Serey* [The Stone Wall], Nalchik: Elbrus Book Press, 1997.
- *Dighem yi Ghwegw* [The Way of the Sun], Nalchik: El’-Fa, 2000.
- *Gwaschene: Mariye Teimriqwe yi Px’wmre Yiwan Bzajasch’emre ya Txide (1561-1568): Roman-Poeme* [Gwaschene: The Tale of Maria Daughter of Temryuk and Ivan the Terrible (1561-1568): Novel-Poem], Nalchik: M. and V. Kotlyarov Book Press, 2005.
- *Ghewnexwp’e* [Trials and Tribulations], Nalchik: M. and V. Kotlyarov Book Press, 2008.



Luba Belaghi (Balagova) at one of her book presentations.  
Solid grounding in Circassian language and culture  
and an open-minded perspective on the outside world  
are the requisites for the long-term survival and  
development of Circassian language and culture.

## **НАРТ ХАСЭ**

[The Nart Council]

### **СОСРЫКЪУЭ КЪЫЗЭРАЛЪХУА ЩЫКІЭР**

(Къэбэрдей псысэ)

#### **The Manner of Sosriqwe's Birth**

(Kabardian text)

### **СОСРЫКЪУЭ КЪЫЗЭРАЛЪХУА ЩЫКІЭР**

Сэтэней гуащэ жьыщІэу псыхъуэм дэст. Нартхэ я жэмыхъуэ Сос жыхуаІэм жэм игъэхъуу псым адрьщІкІэ кыІутт, къехъуэпсащэри и нэфсыр хуэубыдыжакъым, ар Сэтэней бгъурыль мывэм тригъэхуащ.

Сэтэней мывэр къиштэри хъыдан хуабэм кІуэцішыхъащ, унэм къыздихъри, ар жьэгум ирилъхъащ. Жэмыхъуэм и нэфсыр хъыдан хуабэм здыкІуэцілтым, хэхъуэурэ ин хъуащ. Абы кыщыхъуа щІалэм Сосрыкъуэ фІащэщ. Сосрыкъуэ и Іэпкъльэпкъыр жыр хъуащ. Жыр гуащІащэти, Лъэпщ и кІыщым яхъри блэ псыхыгъуэ япсыхъащ. Абы щыгъуэ тІэкІу нэхъ шабэ хъуащ. Ауэ шапсыхъым лъэгужьытІым деж Іэдэм жьэдалъхъэри ахэр цІыху Іэпкъльэпкъым ещхъ хъуащ.

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## The Manner of Sosriqwe's Birth

(There are many variations on the story of the birth of Sosriqwe. This is one of the shorter versions)

LADY Satanay was washing the laundry by the riverside. The Nart cow-herd, Sos, was tending his drove on the other side of the river. Satanay was exquisitely beautiful. When the drover saw her, his desire for her was so immense that he could not withhold his semen\* [in another version of the tale, semen is euphemistically referred to as tears], which fell on a stone beside her.

Satanay picked up the stone and wrapped it in a warm cloth. She carried it home and laid it in the hearth hole. The cowherd's semen inside the warm cloth began to grow. The child engendered therein was named Sosriqwe\* [literally: son of Sos, *qwe* = son]. The body of Sosriqwe turned to very hard steel. To soften the steely mass, the child was taken to Lhepsch\*'s smithy [Lhepsch was the god of the smiths in the Circassian Pantheon], where it was tempered seven\* times [seven was a sacred number in Circassian mythology]. The unwieldy body of Sosriqwe became more lenient. Lhepsch tempered Sosriqwe's body by holding him with a pair of tongs from his knees. These became to resemble the knees of humans [if you refer to the story Sosriqwe Fetches Fire, the Giant curses himself for not recognizing Sosriqwe by his human knees].

This is the Circassian version of the Immaculate Conception, where Lady Satanay is distanced from sin. See *The Story of How the Narts Ravished Lady Satanay*, for another more earthly version of the birth of our hero.

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### **Interesting links:**

**Адыгэ нарт псысэхэр** (The Nart Tales of the Circassians)  
<<http://www.geocities.com/jaimoukha/narttales.html>>

**Сосрыкъуэ мафӀэ къехь** (Sosriqwe Fetches Fire)  
(Circassian equivalent of the Prometheus legend)  
<<http://www.geocities.com/jaimoukha/sosfetchfire.html>>

**ЛӀэпщ и гьушӀ Ӏэдэм и хьыбар**  
(The Story of Lhepsch's Iron Tongs)  
<<http://www.geocities.com/jaimoukha/narttale1.html>>

**More Nart tales**  
<<http://www.geocities.com/jaimoukha/nartsaga3.htm>>

## **НАРТ ПСЫСЭ КІЭЩІ:**

«ЛЪЭПЩ И ГЪУЩІ ІЭДЭМ И ХЪЫБАР»

(Къэбэрдей псысэ)

## **Short Nart Tale: 'The Story of Lhepsch's Iron Tongs'**

(Kabardian tale)

The original Kabardian text shall be given in both Cyrillic and Latin transcriptions.<sup>41</sup> The tale is also rendered into English.

### **ЛЪЭПЩ И ГЪУЩІ ІЭДЭМ И ХЪЫБАР**

(Хъэдэгъэлэ Аскэр зыхуэхъэсыжа «НАРТХЭР: АДЫГЭ ЭПОС» зэджэр тхылъым щыщ (Мейкъуапэ, 1968). Япэрей том, япэрей цикл, 51 псысэ, н. 81. Псысэр къэбэрдейщ)

Лъэпщ гъущІ Іэдэ иыгъыу гъукІэу щытакъым. ЗэрыгъукІэу щытар иІэмкІэ гъущІ плъар иыгъыу аращ. Пщэдджыжь гуэрым Лъэпщ и фызым былымыр дихуауэ, гъуэгум блэ укІа телъу ирихъэлІащ, блэм и кІэпитІыр зэблэдзауэ.

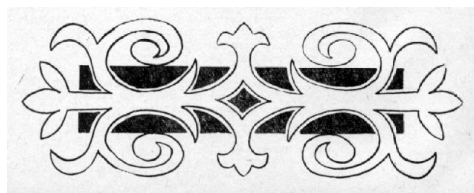
Фызыр къэкІуэжри Лъэпщ жыриІащ:

— Сэ нобэ блэ укІа сыхуэзати абы ещхь Іэдэ пщІамэ, гъущІыр ириубыду, уиІэр имысэу урилажьэ хъунут, — жиІэри. Лъэпщ дэкІри еплъащ. КъэкІуэжыри абы ещхьу Іэдэ ищІри, абыкІэ лажьэу щІидзащ. Абдейжым Іэдэр ящІу къежьащ. Абы япэкІэ Іэдэ щыІакъым. Лъэпщ и Іэгъуапэм зыри иригъаплъэу щытакъым. И кІыщыр сыт щыгъуи гъэбыдауэ, абы и кІуэщІым езыр щылажьэу щытащ. ФІиплъа нэужь и ІэщІагъэм щинэжащ.

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<sup>41</sup> The system used for the [Latin transcription of Circassian](http://www.geocities.com/jaimoukha/latinizedkabardian.html) texts is available in 'Appendix 2: Latinized Kabardian Alphabet', in A. Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp 320-4. It is also found online: <<http://www.geocities.com/jaimoukha/latinizedkabardian.html>>.



## **Lhepsch yi Ghwsch' 'Edem yi X'ibar**

Lhepsch ghwsch' 'ede yi'ighiu ghwch'ew schitaqim. Zerighwch'ew schitar yi'emch'e ghwsch' plhar yi'ighiu arasch. Pschedjizch gwerim Lhepsch yi fizim bilimir diyxwawe, ghwegwm ble wich'a teilhu yiriyhelh'asch, blem yi ch'epiyt'ir zebledzawe.

Fizir qek'wezhriz Lhepsch zhiri'y'asch:

— Se nobe ble wich'a sixwezatiy abi yeschh 'ede psch'ame, ghwsch'ir yiriywbidu, wiy'er yimisew wiriy lazche x'wnwt, — zhiy'eri'y. Lhepsch dech'riy yeplhasch. Qek'wezhriz abi yeschhu 'ede yisch'riy, abich'e lazchew sch'iydzasch. Abdeizhim 'eder yasch'u qeizchasch. Abi yapech'e 'ede schi'aqim. Lhepsch yi 'eghwapem ziri'y yiriyghaplhew schitaqim. Yi ch'ischir sit schighwi'y ghebidawe, abi yi k'wets'im yezir schilazchew schitasch. F'iyplha newizch yi 'esch'aghem schiynezhasch.

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## The Story of Lhepsch's Iron Tongs

(Translated from a Kabardian text, tale no. 51, first cycle, in Asker Hedeghel'e (compiler), *The Narts: Circassian Epos*, vol. 1, Maikop: The Circassian Research and Science Institute, 1968, pp 216-17)

IN the beginning Lhepsch was not a blacksmith to use iron tongs yet. He used his bare hands to manipulate the red-hot iron. One morning while his wife was driving the herd of cattle, she found a dead snake lying on the road, its two ends crossing one another.

The wife came back and told Lhepsch:

— “I came across a dead snake with its head and tail crossing each other. If you could make a pair of tongs in that shape to hold the iron, you will be able to work it without singeing your hands.”

Lhepsch went out and had a look. He came back and fashioned pincers in that form. Thenceforward, he began to utilize them in his work. This was how tongs were invented. Afterwards they started to be manufactured. Lhepsch was not the sort of blacksmith to let anyone look up his sleeve (he was loath to let people in on his tricks). He guarded his secrets well. He always kept his smithy locked while he worked inside. However, after they looked inside his shrine, he gave up his craft, as the magic was gone.

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## СЭТЭНЭЙ ГУАЩЭМ И ЛІЭУЖЬ: «СЭТЭНАЙ-КЪЭГЪАГЪ»

(Хьэтыкъуей псысэ)

### From the legacy of Lady Satanay: Satanay-Flower

(Hetiqwey tale)

#### СЭТЭНАЙ-КЪЭГЪАГЪ

(ХьэдэгьэлІэ Аскэр зыхуэхьэсыжа «НАРТХЭР: АДЫГЭ ЭПОС» ээджэр тхылъым цыщц (Мейкъуапэ, 1968). Япэрей том, япэрей цикл, япэрей псысэ, н. 81. Псысэр хьэтыкъуейщ)

Сэтэнай-гуащэм къэгъэгъэ дахэ горэ, Пшызэ Іушъо, мэзблыгу горэм къотэу къыщилъэгъугъ. «Мыщ фэдиз зидэхэгъэ къэгъагъэр тиунэ пчъэлупэ ІузгъэІыстэнышъ, зыльэгъурэм ыгъэшІагъоу Іорэт!» — ыІуи ядэжъ къыхьыгъагъ, аІуагъ. Къыхьи чІым хигъэІыстагъ. Ыужырэ мафэм ащ еплъымэ — ытхьапэмэ загъэчэрэзыгъ — гъугъэ. Ар Сэтэнай-гуащэм лъэшэу шІоигъуаджэ хъугъэ.

Зэгорэм а къэгъэгъэ дэхэ дэдэм фэдэ къыхьи: «Ыпэрэр мыхъугъэми мыдырэр хъункІи хъун» — ыІуи, ятІонэрэу етІани ыгъэІыстагъ. Ари гъугъэ.

Ящэнэрэу къыхьи: «Ыпэрэхэм афэмыдэу мыр мыгъункІи хъун, — ыІуи, пчъэлупэм ІуигъэІыстагъ. Ащи ытхьапэхэм зыкъырагъэІыхыгъ.

Сыд пае мэз блыгум зэрэпсаухэу къосымыгъэтыгъэх!» — кІэгъожьыгъэу ышъхъэ фиІожьыгъ. ОшІэ-дэмышІэу ошъуапцэхэр къытезэрэхъэхи, ошхышхо къещхыгъ. Нэужырэ мафэм еплъымэ: Сэтэнай-гуащэм икъэгъагъэ гъэшІэгъонэу зыкъыІэтыжьыгъ.

ГушІуагъэ Сэтэнай-гуащэ. Ошхыпсым къэгъагъэм ыпсэ арэуштэу къыпигъэкІэжьыгъ.

Арэуштэу апэрэу цыфмэ псым шІуагъэу иІэр къашІагъ. «Псыр — псэм фэд» — нартмэ аІуагъ.

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## Satanay-Flower

(Original text in the Hetiqwey dialect of Western Circassian, tale no. 1, first cycle, in Asker Hedeghel'e (compiler), *The Narts: Circassian Epos, vol. I*, Maikop: Research and Science Institute, 1968, p81)

ONE day Lady Satanay came across a beautiful flower behind a forest pit on the bank of the Kuban (*Pshize* in Hetiqwey, *Psizch* in Kabardian; literally: the Great River).<sup>42</sup>

— “I will plant this exquisite flower at the threshold of our house so that those who see it are filled with wonder, and will marvel at its sight!” she said, and brought it back home, it is said.

She planted the flower. Next day she looked at it: its leaves had wilted—the flower had withered. This made Lady Satanay very sad indeed.

One day she brought back another flower of the self-same kind. “This once I hope it will escape the fate of its sister,” she said, then again she planted it in her front garden. Again, this one also drooped and dried.

She brought back another plant. “Unlike its predecessors this one will not dry,” she said, and planted it at the threshold. This one’s leaves also wilted.

— “Why didn’t I leave it to grow in the forest pit,” she said in regret. Suddenly, dark clouds gathered, and it began to rain cats and dogs. Next day she looked: Lady Satanay’s flower revived.

Lady Satanay became very happy. The rainwater had breathed life into the flower. Henceforth, mankind came to appreciate the benefits of water. “Water is equivalent to the soul,” said the Narts.

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<sup>42</sup> The drop-wort, *Filipendula*.

## АДЫГЭ ПШЫНАЛЪЭ

[Circassian Music and Songs]

### «СИ АНЭБЗЭ, СИ АДЫГЭБЗЭ»

(‘Siy Anebze, Siy Adigebze’)

Уэрэд жызыIэр Мэремыкьюэ Хьусен

Ди бээр зыгьэдахэхэм, зыгьэшэрыуэхэм ящыщц мы уэрэд дахэр зи  
IэдакьэщIэки уэрэдус Кьэрдэн Хьэсэнрэ, усакиуэ Джэдгьэф Борисрэ.

### ‘My Mother Tongue, My Circassian Language’

[Kabardian]

Sung by Husein Mereimiqwe

Words by Boris Jedghef, music by Hesen Qarden

**Husein Mereimiqwe** (b. 1948) is the Circassian Caruso, singing in the best tradition of belle-canto. He also sings traditional songs, such as «АДЫГЭ ДЖЭГУ» ‘Adige Jegw’ (‘Circassian Dance Party’), and «АНЭДЭЛЪХУБЗЭ» (‘Anedelhxwbze’) [‘Mother Tongue’].

**Hesen Y. Qarden**—Qarden (Kardanov) was born in Shejem I in Kabarda in 1923. In 1947, he was admitted to the Leningrad Conservatoire, where he studied vocal art under K. S. Yisachenko, and

composition. He graduated in 1954. Qarden was a prolific composer and he delved into most classical music genres, including opera. Among his best works are *In the Homeland*, pieces for symphony orchestra, *Sharjes*, a cantata (1957), *Overture to Joy*, on Kabardian and Balkarian themes (1960), *Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra* (1960), *Three Symphonic Dances* (1960), *My Republic*, a cantata (1961), *Symphonic Poem* (1961), and *The Evening in the Village*, a symphonic fantasia, 1961.

<p><b>«СИ АНЭБЗЭ, СИ АДЫГЭБЗЭ»</b></p> <p><b>Макъ:</b> Уи бзэр бзууэ ИэщІамэ, КІэлъылъати къэпхъуэтэж.</p> <p>Ар уи щІэблэм Іурыпчамэ, КъатІи мащэ итІысхъэж.</p> <p><b>Ежъу:</b> КъэтІысыт сибгъукІэ, си анэ дыщэ, Гушэкъу уэрэдкІэ къызэІушщэ.<sup>43</sup> Сэ псэуэ сиІэр, ар си анэбзэщ,</p>	<p><b>‘My Mother Tongue, My Circassian Language’</b></p> <p><b>Voice:</b> If your language flits away like a sparrow, fly after it and snatch it back.</p> <p>If it escapes your young ones, dig your grave and sit in it.</p> <p><b>Chorus:</b> Sit beside me, my gilded mother, And whisper to me my cradle songs. My soul, that is my mother tongue,</p>
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<sup>43</sup> Гушэкъу (*gwscheqwn*; гушэ [*gwsche*] = cradle; екъун [*yeqwn*] = to draw, pull; гушэпс кІапэм екъун [*gwscheps ch'apem yeqwn*] = to pull the end of the cradle strap) is the ceremony celebrating the strapping of the infant to the cradle. Cradle-strapping songs (гушэкъу уэрэдхэр; *gwscheqwn weredxer*) were chanted during the ceremony. The ceremonies could also be held conjointly with the celebration of the birth of the child, a particularly significant occasion in the Circassian festal calendar. Soft straps (гушэпс; *gwscheps*) were used to prevent the infant from falling off the cradle (гушэ; хъыринэ; гушэхъыринэ; *gwsche, x'iryne, gwschex'iryne*=suspended cradle; literally: cradle-swing). The ceremony is also called ‘хъыринэ хушІэщІэн’ (*x'iryne xwsch'esch'en* = to celebrate the strapping of a son to his cradle; literally: ‘to harness to the cradle’).



<p>Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэщ.</p> <p>Пщэдджыжь нэхулъэм вагъуэр польэльри, Къуалэбзуубзэр мэхъур пшынэбзэ. Бзум я бзэ дахэр сфЮщІ си анэбзэ, Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэ.</p> <p><b>Ежъу:</b> КъэтІысыт сибгъукІэ, си анэ дыщэ, Гушэкъу уэрэдкІэ кызылущащэ. Сэ псэуэ сиІэр, ар си анэбзэщ, Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэщ.</p> <p>Жыгей мэзыжъу жъым къигъэушым, Ныдэуэршэру псынэр мэушэ. Псынэ Іущащэр сфЮщІ си анэбзэ, Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэ.</p> <p><b>Ежъу:</b> КъэтІысыт сибгъукІэ, си анэ дыщэ, Гушэкъу уэрэдкІэ кызылущащэ. Сэ псэуэ сиІэр, ар си анэбзэщ, Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэщ.</p> <p>Гъатхэ накъыгъэм щІыр игъэпсалъэу, Іурхэр бэвыгъэу кызырылгальэм. Щыльэм Іурылгыр сфЮщІ си анэбзэ, Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэ.</p> <p><b>Ежъу:</b> КъэтІысыт сибгъукІэ, си анэ дыщэ, Гушэкъу уэрэдкІэ кызылущащэ. Сэ псэуэ сиІэр, ар си анэбзэщ, Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэщ.</p> <p><b>Ежъу:</b> Сэ псэуэ сиІэр, ар си анэбзэщ, Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэщ.</p>	<p>It is truly my mother tongue, my Circassian language.</p> <p>At dawn the stars scatter away, The chirp of birds turneth into a violin tune. Meseems the beautiful sparrow song is my mother tongue, It is my mother tongue, my Circassian language.</p> <p><b>Chorus:</b> Sit by my side, my golden mom, And whisper cradle songs in my ear. The soul that I have, that is my mother tongue, It is verily my mother tongue, my Circassian language.</p> <p>When the wind awakenth the ancient oak forest, The fountain warbleth in conversation. The whispering spring soundeth to me like my mother tongue, It is my mother tongue, my Circassian language.</p> <p><b>Chorus:</b> Sit beside me, my treasured mother, And whisper to me my cradle songs. My soul, that is my mother tongue, It is truly my mother tongue, my Circassian language.</p> <p>As the spring efflorescence maketh earth talk, The words issue forth in great abundance. Earth's bounty seemeth to me like my mother tongue, It is my mother tongue, my Circassian language.</p> <p><b>Chorus:</b> Sit by my side, my sweet mom, And whisper cradle songs in my ear. The soul that I have, that is my mother tongue, It is verily my mother tongue, my Circassian language.</p> <p><b>Chorus:</b> My soul, that is my mother tongue, It is truly my mother tongue, my Circassian language.</p>
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**Ежъу:**

Сэ псэуэ сиІэр, ар си анэбзэщ,  
Ар си анэбзэ, си адыгэбзэщ.

**Chorus:**

My soul, that is my mother tongue,  
It is verily my mother tongue, my Circassian language.

ЗезыдзэкIар: Жэмышъуэ Амджэд (Амыш)  
[Translated by Amjad Jaimoukha]

**АУАН ЗЫХЭЛЪ ХЪЭГЪУЭЛИЫГЪУЭ УЭРЭД:  
«НЫСАШЭ КЪЭХЪУАЩ...»**

**Comic Wedding Song: ‘The wedding is upon us...’**

The following comic composition from the Cherkess was sung at the house of the bridegroom’s father in anticipation of the arrival of the bride during the *Nisashe* (нысашэ) ceremony (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, p125-7):<sup>44</sup>

Нысашэ къэхъуащ...*	‘The wedding is upon us...’
Ежью. Уайра уей, уей, уей, уей, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayra wey, wey, wey, wey, way riya!
(Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) нысашэ къэхъуащ...	(Yey, yey, yey-ya, ay,) the wedding is upon us...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
(Ай,) шы бэджэндыр къытхуащтэ...	(Ay,) they get us horses for hire...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
(Ай,) шы бэджэндыр шхуэIум йогъу...	(Ay,) the hired horses are gnawing at their bits...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
Я фэ лъейри зыльакъуэ...	They pull on their hide high boots...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
Я пыIэжыыр къракъухри...	They pull their caps down over their eyes...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
(Ай,) чэум зэрыдохыр...	(Ay,) as they dart out of the courtyard...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
Я къехуэхыр нэхъыбэщ...	Many fall off their horses...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
Уанэ къуапи трагъэз...	They knock down the saddle pommels...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
Сом зырызкIэ япшыныж...	They are compensated with one rouble each...
Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!	Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!
(Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) нысэу къэтшахэр...	(Yey, yey, yey-ya, ay,) the bride that we have brought...

<sup>44</sup> The sheet music of the song is available in the book.

<p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!  Фьццэ пэрикьи...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!  (Уэ,) кьэрэ пэтинни...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!  Шабиихьуэ шхьэцкьэ...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!  (Уи,) шхьэц бырыбкьэ...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра уай рира!  Быныр зэлегьэхьэри...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!  Кьихьэм хуодальэр...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!  Льэдакьэ пхьашэщ...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!</p> <p>(Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) нысэу кьэтшахэр...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!  Дэным хуэишэщ...</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!  ХьэрэшэкIэ бзаджи.</p> <p>Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!</p>	<p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  Is black and with a turned-up nose...</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  (We,) swarthy and snub-nosed...</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  Her hair is like stiff grass...<sup>45</sup></p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  (Wiy,) and dishevelled...</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  She brings about discord in the family...</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  She intimidates those who come (to the house)...</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  Her heels are rough...</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!</p> <p>(Yey, yey, yey-ya, ay,) the bride that we have brought...</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  She is a clumsy seamstress...</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!  But she has a weakness for buffalo milk.</p> <p>Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!</p>
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A recoding of the song by Vladimir Bereghwn is available on the CD accompanying Amjad Jaimoukha's book *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals & Music (Kabardian, Cherkess, Adigean, Shapsugh & Diaspora)*, London and New York: Bennett and Bloom, 2009. The song can also be heard at <http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-journal.php>.

<sup>45</sup> 'Шабий' is the Tor grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*), a big and tough grass.

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The book is available in the fabulous DjVu format. Musicians and musicologists can find the sheet music of the lullaby on the quoted page.

**УЭШХ КЪЭЗЫШЭ УЭРЭДХЭР: «ХЪАНЦЭГУАЩЭР  
ЗЭТЭЩЭРА...»; «О ЕЛЭМЭ, СИ ШЪЭО  
НАШЪУХЪО!»**

(Шапсыгь уэрэдхэр)

**Rain Invoking Chants: Song to Hantsegwashe, the  
Goddess of Rain: 'We are escorting Hantsegwashe...';  
Song to St. Elijah: 'Oh Elijah, my grey-eyed laddie!'**

(Shapsugh songs)

Нобэр кьыздэсми уэгьу щыхъукIэ хьIуфэ шапсыгьхэм Хьэнцэгуащэ кьырашэI, «Хьанцэгуащэр зэтэщэра...», «О Елэмэ, си шьэо нашъухъо!» уэрэдхэр жаIзурэ уэшх кьригьэшхыну Тхьэшхуэм йольэIухэр. «Елэ» Илья бегьымбарыр аращ.

In times of droughts, a procession carrying a (masked spade-like) effigy of the Goddess of Rain, Hentsiygwasche (or Hentsegwasche=Spade-Lady),<sup>46</sup> marched through the stricken village with supplications for rain.<sup>47</sup> The bearers of the Goddess would chant 'Hentsegwasche zidoshere!' («Хьэнцэгуащэ зыдошэрэ!»). The households along the route poured water on the idol, exclaiming, 'Our Lord, let it rain in plenty upon us!' (Я дэ ди тхьэ, уэшх кьегьэщэщэх!). They donated (uncooked) victuals, such as husked millet, eggs, dried meat, etc, to the procession, which then headed to the river-valley, where the foodstuffs were cooked and consumed whilst prayers were being said. The

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<sup>46</sup> Please note that both Kabardian and Adigean terms and expressions are being used, which explains the variation in orthography.

<sup>47</sup> In one form of the rite, the effigy resembled the shape of a cross, apparently a Christian income to the ancient ceremony.

partakers also performed *psixelhafe* (псыхъэльъафэ), the rite of bathing fully-clothed to call forth the rains. According to Kabardian tradition, the idol was later taken to the village centre, where it was fixed to the ground and the supplicants then performed the dance *wij x'wrey* (удж хъурей) round it. On that day, it was considered a great sin to appropriate other people's possessions, and it was strictly forbidden to engage in *wineyidzihe* (*wine-yidzihe*; унэидзыхъэ) or *k'wese* (к'уэсэ), the age-old custom according to which a suitor, with a group of trusted friends, abducted his beloved (with her own assent) from her parent's house on a set date and time.<sup>48</sup>



Depiction of the ritual of supplication for rain.  
The effigy of Hentsiygwasche, the Goddess of Rain,  
is carried across the village and doused with water.

Despite their specific regionality, two Shapsugh versions of the rain supplication – enchanting and sweet – are included as the Western Circassian representatives of this song genre, for the sake of comparison (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1980, p80; pp 87-8).<sup>49</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup> This custom, which still exists to this day, corresponded to the old Western custom of elopement.

<sup>49</sup> The sheet music of both chants is available in the book.

residents of the three villages of Lighwetx, Qalezch and Hajeqwe (in what is now called the Lazarevsky District) would assemble at a set location on the bank of the River Ashe, after escorting the effigy with the ritual chant ‘Hantsegwasher zeteshera...’\* («Хьанцэгуашэр зэтэщэра...») (‘We are escorting Hantsegwashe...’), to perform the supplication ceremonies, including chanting, dancing, drenching each other with water, and symbolic sacrifice. The effigy of the Goddess of Rain was fixed in the middle of the river until the arrival of the rains.<sup>50</sup> In the first chant, ‘We are escorting Hantsegwashe...’\*, the supplication is addressed to the (native Circassian) Goddess of Rain (Hantsegwashe, in Western Circassian), whilst in the second, ‘We Yeleme, siy schewe naschw’we!’\* («О Елэмэ, си шьэо нашьухьо!») (‘Oh Elijah, my grey-eyed laddie!’), St. Elijah (Yele) – personified as a grey-eyed youth – is invoked. The latter chant accompanied ritual dancing in the annual rain ceremonies of the Shapsugh held in April supplicating the Deity of Rain for summer rain.

<b>Хьанцэгуашэр зэтэщэра...*</b>	<b>Song to Hantsegwashe, the Goddess of Rain: ‘We are escorting Hantsegwashe...’</b>
Хьанцэгуашэр зэтэщэра — Ощхэр кьещха!	We are escorting Hantsegwashe — It is raining! <sup>51</sup>
Ныхэтхы кьыщэгьуагьо — Ощхэр кьещха!	It is thundering in Nixetx — <sup>52</sup> It is raining!
Лыгьотхы кьыщегьэшха!	May it rain in Lighwetx! <sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> More details of these ceremonies (in Russian) are found in B. Kh. Bgazhnokov, 1991, pp 62-4.

<sup>51</sup> This is more like wishful thinking.

<sup>52</sup> Nixetx is the name of a summit (in classical Shapsughia in Western Circassia), a few kilometres from where the supplication ceremony used to be held.



Ощхэр къещха!	It is raining!
Шъэонажъор — къоепсы рагъашъуа!	Schewenazchw — they are giving him whey for a drink! <sup>54</sup>

<b>О Елэмэ, си шъэо нашъухъо!*</b>	<b>Song to St. Elijah, invoking rain: 'Oh Elijah, my grey-eyed laddie!'</b>
О Елэмэ, си шъэо нашъухъо! Жъыу. О Елэрэ Ялэу!	Oh Elijah, my grey-eyed laddie! Chorus: Oh Elijah Elias!
Шъэо нашъухъор къоепсы рагъашъо! Жъыу. О Елэрэ Ялэу!	They are giving the grey-eyed lad whey for a drink! Chorus: Oh Elijah Elias!
Гъуитхы къыщэгъуагъу! Жъыу. О Елэрэ Ялэу!	It is thundering in Ghwyitx! <sup>55</sup> Chorus: Oh Elijah Elias!

<sup>53</sup> Lighwetx (=Ridge of Fire) is the ancient (Circassian) appellation of a Shapsugh settlement on the left bank of the River Ashe, at a distance of about 13 km from the Black Sea coast. The village is located in the Lazarevsky District (of Sochi) in the Krasnodar Krai. In the 1920s, the name of the village was supplanted by the Russian onomastic 'Krasnoaleksandrovsky III'. However, the original name was restored in 1993. With the choice of Sochi as the site of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, it would be apt to emphasize that the whole northeast coast of the Black Sea was once part of the homeland of the Circassians. The Circassian nationalists still lay claim on the whole area and are adamant that the original Circassian place names be restored in all of Circassia. For Circassian onomastics of the region (and historical Circassia in general), refer to J. N. Kokov's and K. Kh. Meretukov's works listed in the bibliography.

<sup>54</sup> 'Schewenazchw' is the name of a brother of a (hallowed and benedict) 'victim' of lightning. It literally means 'Half-Awake Lad'.

<sup>55</sup> Ghwyitx is the name of a ridge in the mountains of Western Circassia, accessible from the road connecting Maikop to Tuapse on the Black Sea coast. Tuapse (Туапсе [T'wapse]=Two Rivers, in Circassian) is situated between Sochi in the south and Gelendzhik in the north.

Лыгъотхы кыщцебгъэщхэу! Жъыу. О Елэрэ Ялэу!	Will it to rain in Lighwetx! Chorus: Oh Elijah Elias!
О Елэмэ, си шъэо нашъухъу! Жъыу. О Елэрэ Ялэу!	Oh Elijah, my grey-eyed laddie! Chorus: Oh Elijah Elias!
Шъэо нашъухъор къоепсы рагъашъо! Жъыу. О Елэрэ Ялэу!	They are giving the grey-eyed lad whey for a drink! Chorus: Oh Elijah Elias!

Recodings of the songs by the Adigean State Folk Song Ensemble ‘Yislahamiy’ are available on the CD accompanying Amjad Jaimoukha’s book *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals & Music (Kabardian, Cherkess, Adigean, Shapsugh & Diaspora)*, London and New York: Bennett and Bloom, 2009. The chants can also be heard at <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-journal.php>>.

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## АДЫГЭ ФИЭЦХЪУНЫГЪЭРЭ ФОЛЬКЛОРРЭ

### Circassian Religion and Folklore

#### БЖЭ

#### Death & Obsequies

Central to the cult of death was the belief in *hedrixe* (хьэдрыхэ) or the afterlife, and in the immortality of the soul. The Circassians venerated their ancestors, and took good care of the ancient burial grounds and sepulchres, *q'ezch* (кхъэжь). Elaborate ceremonies of death were developed, which sometimes touched on the bizarre.

A wife mourned her husband in a wild manner, scratching her face and body until they were bloodied. A husband struck his face with a whip until it turned black and blue. The corpse underwent ceremonious washing, *hedegheps-ch'* (хьэдэггэпскI), on a special slab, *hedegheps-ch'-px'ebghw* (хьэдэггэпскI-пхъэбгъу).

Dirges were chanted by the corpse of the deceased, and special prayers were said. The collective of laments over the dead was called '*bzhe*' («бжэ»; literally: 'door'). A couple of examples are presented (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1980, p201; p202).

Бжэ:	Dirge:
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<b>Ай, Лъэбыцэ мыгъуэ!</b> <sup>56</sup>	<b>‘Alas, hapless Lhebitse!’</b> <sup>57</sup>
Ай, Лъэбыцэ мыгъуэ! Уи кӀуэцӀыкӀыщӀэм жиӀэр уи жьэм жегъэӀи Уи гур гъэзагъэ, (уэуэу, ы-ы)! Уа, уа, уа, уа, уэу! Уа, уа, уэу! Уа, а, а, а, а!	Alas, hapless Lhebitse! What grieves thy heart, let thy mouth relate, And relieve thine soul, (wewew, i-i)! Wa, wa, wa, wa, wew! Wa, wa, wew! Wa, a, a, a, a!

<b>Бжэ: Уэ, сыту Ӏей мыгъуэрэ къытхузэтрапӀа уи нитӀ мыгъуэр!</b> <sup>58</sup>	<b>Dirge: ‘Oh, how thou have shut your pitiful eyes to us for ever and ay!’</b>
(А ды-ды-ды-дыд,) мыгъуэ! Уэ, сыту Ӏей мыгъуэрэ къытхузэтрапӀа уи нитӀ мыгъуэр! (Ей-ей), си Мурат!  А, си нэжан цӀыкӀу мыгъуэ! А, си нэжан цӀыкӀу мыгъуэ, (ей-ей)! Уэ, сыт мыгъуэр сусыну, (уэуэу)! А, ай! (А, уэу, уэу, уэу, уэу, уэу,) мыгъуэ! (А ды-ды-ды-ды-дыд,) мыгъуэ!	(A di-di-di-did,) alas! <sup>59</sup> Oh, how thou have shut your pitiful eyes for ever and ay! (Ey-ey), my Murat!  Ah, my poor bright-eyed little one! Alas, my clear-eyed lad! Oh, I am lost for words for my grief, woe is me! A, ay! (A, wew, wew, wew, wew, wew,) woe unto me! (A di-di-di-di-did,) alas!

<sup>56</sup> This is a Kabardian elegy.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Lhebitse’ (literally: ‘Shaggy-legged’; ‘Covered with long fluffy hair about the ankles’) is the name of the (male) person whose death is being lamented.

<sup>58</sup> This is a Kabardian elegy.

<sup>59</sup> ‘A di-di-di-did’ is an interjection expressing woe and sorrow.

The deceased was carried off to the cemetery on a stretcher, *q'able* (кхъаблэ). A monument, *q'aschhedese* (кхъашхъэдэсэ), was erected by the head of grave. A slab, *hedepx'ebghw* (хъэдэпхъэбгъу), was used to shut the niche in the grave. Special guards, *q'ex'wme* (кхъэхъумэ), ensured the upkeep and sanctity of burial grounds.

The deceased was buried with full panoply of his arms and accoutrements, and an ample supply of food, to serve him well on his journey and in the afterlife. In the 16th century, upon the decease of a nobleman, a high platform was constructed in the open, on which the corpse, with the innards removed, was placed in a sitting posture for eight days. The kin and companions of the dead visited him every day, offering cups of silver, bows, fans and so on. The two eldest relatives stood guard at each side of the exposed body, supporting themselves against the estrade and propping themselves with staffs. On the left hand, a young girl holding a fan was posted to drive away the flies. In front of the estrade sat the wife with her eyes transfixed on the corpse, but she never cried, as this was considered shameful. At the expiry of the wake, the body and the gifts were placed on a cross formed by sowing a tree trunk in half, and taken in a procession to the sepulchre. A mound was piled over the sarcophagus, which contained the favourite weapons and costumes of the dead. The mightier the deceased, the greater was the tumulus.

With the body inhumed, an attendant was instructed before dinner to saddle the steed of the deceased and take it by hand to the new tomb. He was to call thrice upon the departed to come out and take a meal with his family and friends. Having done that, the attendant returned with the steed, needless to say, with his entreaties unheeded. Dinner was then had—the partakers content that they have done their duty towards their dead kin. This charade was repeated for many days.<sup>60</sup> In later times, priests officiated burial ceremonies.

Some aspects of these curious ceremonies were confirmed by archaeology. Finds that go back to the Circassian Belorechenskaya

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<sup>60</sup> Details of ancient burial rites are found in S. Khan-Girey, 1978, pp 315-22.

culture (Belorechenskaya is situated to the northwest of Maikop), which existed from the 13th to the 16th centuries, revealed the remains of barrows belonging to Adiga (Circassian) nobility. Objects found included exquisite sabres, pieces of armour, helmets, and other objects of foreign origin. Some food vessels were also found in old burial grounds. This is one happy occasion when accounts by a foreign traveller (Giorgio Interiano, who wrote in the middle of the 16th century) and archaeology coincided.<sup>61</sup>

It would seem that the custom of burying personal implements, especially arms, gave way to more pragmatic considerations, as the exigency of defending the land against a determined foe gained ascendancy in the 19th century. John A. Longworth, in his usual mock-serious style, commented on the discarded practice: 'In former times it was the custom to bury the dead with their arms and accoutrements; but the modern Circassians, wiser in their generation, seem to think the defunct will be equally satisfied by being decorated with them previously, and then buried without them.' (1840, vol. 2, p17).

After the funeral rites had been completed, a sumptuous feast was held in honour of the deceased in the sacred grove, under the trees. Games were played and dance galas took place as festal rites. For the poorer families, the celebration was postponed until the necessary victuals have been accumulated. During the first week of the death of a member of a family, the household was spared any culinary chores. The friends of the deceased took turns in providing catering for and wait upon the mourners and condolers.

The traditional period of mourning was forty days during which the closest members of the family visited the grave daily. At the end of this term, a memorial festival took place and alms were handed out. A year later, a ceremony was held in full mourning garb in which the steed and the rest of the weapons of the deceased were displayed and sacrifices made. A procession with lit torches and bare-foot partakers was made to

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<sup>61</sup> For Interiano's work, see Ramusio, G. B., *Giorgio Interiano, Genovese a M. Aldo Manutio Romano, Della vita de Zychi chiamati Circassi*, Raccolta di Viaggi, t. 2, Venetia, 1583.

the house of the deceased bringing cattle and victuals. The next morning the men of the village gathered to engage in sport competitions. Commemoration ceremonies called ‘*hede’ws*’ («хьэдэIyc»); ‘pottage for the cadaver’) were held annually in winter.

Those killed in battle were collected at cessation of fighting at sundown and taken back home to be received in a macabre ceremony called ‘*hedepizche*’ («хьэдэпежьэ»); ‘corpse-reception’). If a corpse was seized by the enemy, a price was paid to ransom it. During the last and desperate phase of Circassian resistance against Russian advance, an edict was issued to keep the bodies of the dead at the front, so as not to give shirkers the chance to keep away from battle. Similar ceremonies were held for those killed while travelling.

At one stage of their social development, the Circassians used to practise geronticide, or the ritual killing of old people when they reach a certain age. This might have been an ancient form of mercy killing, euthanasia, which allowed the old and feeble to die in dignity. Some societies in Eastern Europe kept this tradition until the 1930s.<sup>62</sup>

The Narts had a special council of doom, *Zchiwich’ Xase* (жьыукI хасэ), whose duty was to summon people whose time had come on the eve of their execution, and to inform them of the council’s verdict. The Nart Tribunal of Doom used to be held at the mighty house of the Alij (Алыджхэ я унэ), where the Nart Council usually held its sessions. At the end of the meeting, the doomed one was presented with a glass of wine as a toast. He was allowed to spend the eve with his loved ones. On the day of execution, the condemned was thrown down the Yinzhiij Gorge.<sup>63</sup> The height from which the doomed ones were pushed to their death was called ‘*Zchigheyibg*’ («Жьыгъэибг») [‘Mount of Old Age’].

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<sup>62</sup> See for example T. P. Vukanović, ‘Killing of Old People among Gypsies on the Balkan Peninsula’, in *VI Congrès International des Sciences Anthropologiques et Ethnologiques*, Paris, 30 July-6 August 1960, vol. 2, Paris: Musée de l’Homme, 1964.

<sup>63</sup> Yinzhiij (Инжыдж) is the Zelenchuk River, a left tributary of the Kuban (Псыжь; Psizch). Located in the Karachai-Cherkess Republic, the Yinzhiij River has its source in the Caucasus Mountains.

Legend has it that one elder on death row managed to save the people from a number of impending disasters and, in gratitude for the feat, the custom was scrapped, and the wisdom of the old started to be appreciated. Subsequently, Circassian society held its elders in great esteem, and appreciated their wisdom and perspicacity.<sup>64</sup> According to another version, a young Nart forcefully saved his doomed father and the custom consequently fell into disuse, as the council lost some of its prestige.

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<sup>64</sup> See «НАРТХЭ ЗЫХАНА ХАБЗЭ» [‘The Custom Renounced by the Narts’], in *The Hearth Tree: Circassian Cultural Miscellany*, vol. 1, issue 1, January 2009, pp 23-30. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-journal.php>> (accessed 8 May 2009). [In Circassian and English]



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## АДЫГЭ ХЪУЭХЪУЭНЫГЪЭ: МАЗЭЦІЭ ХЪУЭХЪУ

### Circassian Toastmaking: Toast to the New Moon

Адыгэхэм я пасэрей хъуэхъухэр дахэщ, бейщ, гъуэээджэщ, езы хъуэхъухэм мыхъэнэшхуэ яхэлъащ. Пасэрей адыгэлхэмрэ адыгэ цыхубзхэмрэ хъуэхъу зымыщІэ къахэкІу зэрыщымыта дэнэ къэна, абыхэм я нэхъыбапІэхэм езыхэм хъуахъуэ гурыхуэу уэр-сэру яусыфу щытахэт.

ЛӀэужьыгъуэ куэд мэхъу адыгэ хъуэхъухэр. Псом хуэмыдэу куэд дыдэ хуэунэтІащ гуащІэдэкІымрэ хъэгъуэлІыгъуэ, гуфІэгъуэ, ТхьэлъэІу Іэнэхэмрэ.

<b>МАЗЭЦІЭ ХЪУЭХЪУ</b>	<b>Toast to the New Moon</b>
МазэщІэу кытхуэунэхуар – Мазэ угъурлы тхуэщІ, Мазэ узыншэ тхуэщІ, Мазэ уэфІ тхуэщІ, ФІыгъуэ кытхудэгъакІуэ, Дыдэгъэузыншэ! Зауэ-банэ щымыІэу, Дунейр мамыру щыбгъэтыну Дынохъуэхъу, ДынолъэІу!	The new moon that has come to shine upon us – May it be kind to us, May it prove healthful, May it bring good weather and Good fortune in its wake, May it keep us safe and sound! We wish And pray That war and strife Would give way to peace and harmony!

The toast is rendered into Latin script:

**Mazesch'e X'wex'w**

Mazesch'ew qitxwewnexwar –  
Maze wighwrlı txwesch',  
Maze wizinshe txwesch',  
Maze wef' txwesch',  
F'ighwe qitxwdeghak'we,  
Dideghewzinshe!  
Zawe-bane schimi'ew,  
Duneyr mamıru schibghetinu  
Dinox'wex'w,  
Dinolhe'w.

## АДЫГЭМ И ПСАЛЪЭ ДАХЭ

Нало Заур

[КъардэнгүшI Зырамыку, «АДЫГЭ ХЪУЭХЪУХЭР», Налшык: «Эльбрус» тхыль тедзапIэ, 1985, н. 5-14]

Хъуэхъур мэгу Iэмалхэм ящыщ зыт, абыкIэ дунейр къагъIурыщIэну хэтт. Адыгэхэм, сыт хуэдэ Iуэху бгъэдэувэми, ар хъуэхъукIэ къаштэрти, хъуэхъукIэ ягъэтIылыжырт. Хъуэхъужьыр зэджэр насыпт. НасыпкIэ зэджэр цIыхур зыхуей-зыхуэныкъуэр къехъулIэнырт.

Хъуэхъужьхэм я нэхъыбэр зыхуэгъзар адыгэхэм я тхьэхэраш, сыт щхьэкIэ жыпIэу щытмэ, дунейми псэ хэту, къэхъукъашIэ къэс, Iуэхугъуэ къэс тепщэ гуэрхэр яIэу къафIэщIырти. Псалъэм папщIэ, уэшхым хэхауэ тхьэ иIэу я гугъэти, абы елъэIуурэ Хьэнцигуашэ зрашэрт, мэзым щIэс псори МэзытхьэкIэ зэджэм IэщIэлъу къалыгъэрти, къуентхь щIэлъэIуу уэрэдкIэ ягъэляпIэрт.

Хъуахъуэм и псалъэр убзэкIэ къыщIидзэрт, псалъэм и кIэр лъэIукIэ игъэтIылыжырт. А тIум я кур кIыхь-кIэщIми, абы хъуэхъур зэджэ псори егъэлярэ ехъэжъауэ къиIуэтэн хуейт: гиперболэр хъуэхъу псалъэм и нэщэнэ пашэщ. Тепщэм къебгъэщIэну узыхуейр дахэу, Iэтауэ жумыIэфамэ, уи лъэIур мызэщIэну къалыгъэрти, пасэрейхэр я хъуэхъубзэр шэрыуэ, гъэхуа зэрыхъуным хущIэкъурт. НэгъуэщIу жыпIэмэ, хъуэхъур мэгъубзэ хъун щхьэкIэ, усэу ягъэпсырт, щIэхъуахъуэр куэду къехъулIэн щхьэкIэ, псалъэ шэрыуэ къалыгъуэрти, егъэляуэ яIуатэрт:

Вагъуэм хуэдизыр я мэлү,  
Гуэлым хуэдизыр я гъэшу,  
Шэрхъым хуэдизыр я кхъуейуэ,  
Фызибгъум шатэр зэIащIэу,  
ФызипщIым кхъуей яхузу...

ЩыIэщ хъуэхъуи, и кIэр гыбзэкIэ иухыжу — цIыхур зэджа фIыр зэщIэну зи жагъуэм ебгыжырт: «ар зи жагъуэм и нэм бжэгъу

щыуэ», мопхуэдэ ухъу, мыпхуэдэ ухъу! — жи́лэрти. Гыбзэри,  
хъуэхъум ещхъу, мэгу псалъэти, а тIур зэпыувэрт.

ХъуэхъуэкIэр лIэужьыгъуитI мэхъу. Япэм — тхъэм зыхуимыгъазу  
— цIыхур зэджэ псори егъэлеяуэ кърэбжэкIри хъуэхъу псалъэмкIэ  
егъэтIылъыж:

Вабдзэ махуэ тетлхъауэ,  
Жыр махуэ дыхуэзауэ,  
Щы фIыцIэм и махуэр кыигъэзэну,  
Кыигъазэр щыгулъу лъэльэну.  
Хум и фIыпIэкIэ кызырылъэльыну  
Сынохъухъу!

«АбыкIэ сохъуахъуэ», е «апхуэдэу ухъу» — же́лэри, тхъэм  
емыльэIуу, дунейр кыигъэIурыщIэну хэтщ мы хъуэхъуэкIэр.

ЕтIуанэр тхъэм елъэIуныращ:

Я дэ ди тхъэ,  
Тхъэгъэлэдж,  
Телъыджэр зи Iэужь,  
Едгъэжъа Iуэхур гъэбагъуэ!..

Дэ кызырытфIэщIымкIэ, япэрей хъуэхъуэкIэр нэхъыжщ, ауэ  
иужькIэ хъуэхъуэкIитIри зэхэзэрыхъыжащи, зэщIэлъу кьокIуэ.

Хъуэхъур сыт зэмани фIым еджэу арати, ди адэжхэм  
«хъуэхъуэнымрэ» «дахэ жыIэнымрэ» зэблагъэу кьалыгъэри, а  
псалытIри синониму кьагъэсэбэп хъуащ: дахэ жыпIэмэ, фIым  
уоджэ, псалъэ шэрыуэкIэ уопсалъэ, цIыхум и гуапэ уощI.  
НэгъуэщIу жыпIэмэ, дахэ жыпIэныр хъуэхъуэным зэрыхэтым  
хуэдэу кьабзэу, хъуэхъуэнри дахэ жыIэным хэтщ. Ещхьыркьабзэу  
«адыгэбзэ жыIэнри» и зы кIапэкIэ хъуэхъуэнымрэ дахэ жыIэнымрэ  
тохуэ: абы и кыикI куэдым ящыщ зыщ хъуэхъуэнри. «Хъуэхъуэн»,  
«тхъэ елъэIун», «дахэ жыIэн», «адыгэбзэ жыIэн» — а синонимхэм  
кьагъэнаIуэ хъуэхъум кыикIуа гъуэгумрэ игъуэта  
зэхъуэкIыныгъэмрэ.

Хьюэхуэныр хабзэ дахэу кьэнэжаши, нобэ абы пыщлар угурлыгээрэ губзыгьагээрэщ. Цыхум ущехуэхуэклэ, уэри кьохуэхуэж: дахэ щызэжепкэклэ, фы щызэхуэплатэклэ, уигури нэхь кьабзэ, нэхь зэхуэмахуэ зэхуохуэ; фы сщлшэрэт, сэбэп сыхуашэрэт жыпэу уеузэщл. Кымьдэклэ, хуэхуэным цыхум и бээр, и псэльэккэр еузэщл — ккэщлу, зэщлэкьуауэ, гьэхуарэ шэрыуэу псалъэу егьасэ. Ехьэжарэ зэрызельафэу хуахуэм «тхьэри еудэгу, цыхури зэгуегьэп» хужалэрт. Зэщлэкьуарэ дахэу ямыгьэлуа хуэхуэм и мэгуей кьулыкьур хуэмыгьэзащлэу кьабжырт пасэрейхэм, и эстетическэ кьалэныр хуэмыгьэзащлэу кьалыгьтэ иджырейхэми. Абы кьыхэккэщ «хуэхуэр кьыхь пщымэ, псалъэ мэхуэж» жалэныр. Нобэ хуэхуэм игьэзащлэр гьэсэнэгьэ, эстетическэ кьалэнщ.

Адыгэм мыхуэхуэф яхэтакьым. Хуэхуэр зи лэужьу кьызыбгьэдэклар джэгуаклуэжьхэрщ. Абыхэм я кьалэнт сыт хуэдэ дауэдапщэ кьэхуами (хьэдэщлэлъхьэм кьинэмыщл) щыхуэхуэну. Джэгуаклуэхэр мэгуу кьалыгьтэрти, ахэр хуэхуэамэ е бгамэ, я жыкэр зэщлэну кьафлэщлырт. Джэгуаклуэшхуэхэм нэхь еклуу, нэхь шэрыуэу жала хуэхуэхэр жызылам и цлэклэ ежьэнклэ хьурт — мобы и хуэхуэ, мыбы и хуэхуэ жалэу ялуэтэжу. Апхуэдэу Агьнокьуэ Лашэ, Пащлэ Бэчмырзэ, Сыжажэ Кьыльшыкьуэ сымэ я цлэклэ ежьауэ псалъэ дахэ куэд нобэми цыхум ящлэж.

## Circassian Toasts

Toasts were first uttered as magic invocations and incantations to unlock hidden powers or to appease the gods. Important occasions and undertakings were preceded and accompanied by complex rituals of toast-making. A feast could only start with a toast by the eldest participant, then by the guests, and the affair could last throughout the session, which at times lasted for hours on end.

There were two kinds of toasts. The first had the toastmaster addressing one of the gods of the Circassian Pantheon. The other kind, believed to be more ancient, consisted of a corpus of toasts that were more like wishes, invoking no deity. The 'Toast to the New Moon' is an example of the second category.

All young boys were introduced into the art of toast-making, and it is said that no Circassian was ever at a loss for pithy words befitting all occasions. Toast-making was inevitably subject to etiquette. If a person pronounced a toast in another's honour, it was expected that it be reciprocated. Long toasts were not in good taste, according to the saying, 'A long toast turns into a speech' («Хьуэхьур кьыхь пщымэ, псалъэ мэхьу»).

There were toasts to the new moon, good ploughing, blessed seed planting, increase of cattle, plentiful harvest, marital bliss, and so on. Marriage rituals claimed a considerable chunk of the toast repertoire. Before setting out on a hunt, toasts invoked the goodwill of Mezihe (Мэзытхьэ), god of forests, the hunt and beasts. Before going out on ploughing campaigns, toasts were addressed to Theghelej (Тхьэгьэлэдж) god of the crops, praying for abundance.

The first day after the autumn harvest was considered a national holiday. Ceremonies were held before allotment of crop shares. Toasts addressed to the supreme god, *Theshxwe* (Тхьэшхуэ), were pronounced, followed by supplications and prayers to bless the harvest. Feasts were held and song and dance parties took place. Another harvest festival was held in March marking the Circassian New Year.

Throughout history, there have been past masters in the art of toast-making. Memorable pronouncements were readily associated with the originators and were learnt by heart by literary connoisseurs. Toastmasters were like magicians, literally spelling their incantations and charming the listeners into ecstatic trances. Among toast wizards of the early 20th century were Lashe Aghnoqwe (Агънокъуэ Лашэ), Beshmirze Pasch'e (ПащІэ Бэчмырзэ), Qilhshiqwe Sizhazhe (Съжажэ Къыльшыкъуэ), all of whom were also accomplished minstrels.



## **АДЫГЭ КЪАФЭ**

### **[Circassian Dance]**

Dancing has always had a special place in the life of the Circassians. In mythical times, the Narts held annual festivals and tournaments in which dances were held. No public or family festivity was complete without a round or more of dancing. It also kept the male dancers in tip-top shape thanks to the energetic tunes. It is nowadays the most popular kind of folk art.

Dance was initially a religious rite, a kind of spirited prayer. Ancient Circassians believed that there was hidden power in dance, and they used to perform ritual round dances (удж) before embarking on important undertakings. Later it turned into a form of festive celebration, keeping some of its ritual significance. It was only in recent times that dance turned into a pastime devoid of religious meaning. All dances are based on the rich material of Circassian folklore. Cossacks, Georgians and other Caucasians adopted many Circassian dance forms and some melodies.

In general, women's movements were graceful and reserved, no wild movements being required or displayed. The new generation of female 'sedate' dancers sometimes seizes the opportunity in informal sessions to show off vigorous moves, in parody of their male colleagues. In one modern comical choreography, gender-bending females perform acrobatic feats, strictly masculine affairs, with flourish. In borrowed dance forms, say the 'Dance of Daghestani Lasses,' some dizzying footwork gets the audience gasping for breath, never mind the dancers.

### **Dance as a religious ritual**

It was believed that performance of special rites of worship in which supplicants encircle a venerated object, like a holy tree, or a spot stricken by lightning, invoked the resident spirits and unlocked their latent powers. Some accounts tell of solemn processions round a tree with the supplicants carrying torches. These formed a significant part of a complex system of prayers. The most sacred class of dances was called «удж (хъурей)» [*wij (x'wrey)*], which was performed by dancers forming a circle round a venerated object. It later turned into a dance performed by couples with music, losing all religious significance. A special dance consecrated to the supreme god, «Тхъэшхуэ удж» (*Theshxwe wij*) [*Wij* of the Supreme God], was executed with the bodies of the participants in compact formation. It was revived recently, but merely as a dance form.

Religious rites were sometimes accompanied by chanting. Songs were intoned during feasts in honour of thunder, during sacrifices and other pagan festivals. When lightning struck a place or an object, a special kind of «удж» (*wij*) was performed round the stricken spot accompanied by «Шыблэ уэрэд» ('Schible Wered')—'Song of Lightning.'

### **Generic ritual**

The rites of worship of Theghelej (Тхъэгъэлэдж), God of flora, had people of both sexes gather in the early hours of the day and start on a procession to the local sacred grove. They took with them an ample supply of victuals and a number of sacrificial animals. Festivities started when they entered the ancient wood. An effigy of the deity in the shape of a cross was placed near one of the most venerated trees in the wood. Prayer chants were intoned in single voice and chorus. The men and women formed a circle round the idol and the sacred dance, *wij*, was performed solemnly in much the same way it is done today. Couples moved round the icon holding hands, with music and chant in the background. When the effigy had been circumambulated a few times, a new formation was assumed in which all partakers in the dance faced the icon holding hands and lifting them periodically in supplication.

Prayers were then taken up by the priest, usually the eldest person in the group, who delivered a sermon that included a homily and thanksgiving

for blessings rendered by the god. Next the rite of *thelhe'w* (ТХԵՆԼԵՅԻ) took place. The idol was presented with many culinary offerings, including *makhsima*, the national beverage. Animals, such as bulls, rams, lambs, ewes, and goats, were then sacrificed in front of the idol for the purpose of propitiation and propagation of bliss. The priest then distributed the flesh among the worshippers, not forgetting the ill and the poor who were unable to attend. The slaughtered animals were then cooked and feasted upon. The occasion merged solemnity with merry-making in a natural and healthy manner.



Depiction of generic festive ceremonies.  
No matter what the occasion, activities, such as dance,  
horse racing, shooting, gaming, were constant staples.



Modern-day Circassians celebrating the Birth (or Return) of the Sun (дыгъэгъазэ; *Digheghaze*) on 22 December 2007 in Nalchik. This is the time when the sun reaches its lowest apparent point in the sky and starts to rise up, a propitious occasion for an agrarian-pastoral society. This is one of a number of pre-historic festivals that have been resurrected in the new millennium. The pole in the background is the principal emblem of this celebration. The round loaf of bread high on the pole is an ancient folkloric depiction of the sun-god.

## Kinds of Circassian Dances

### Адыгэ къафэхэр

The following are generic dances:

«Къафэ» (*Qafe*) is a stately slow dance, performed with pride touching on aloofness and with a great measure of self-control. It is verily the dance of the princes. There have been hundreds of tunes devised for this dance throughout the ages. Neighbouring peoples, like the Balkars and the Ossetes, adopted and adapted this dance form. The Ossetic version is called «Кашкон кафт» (*Kashkon Kaft*) [*'Kabardian Dance'*]. Most old dances had a measure of 6/8. Recent melodies are lighter and more brisk, having a 2/4 measure.

«ЗэхуэкIуэ» (*Zexwek'we*; literally: 'going to one another') is a slow 'romantic' dance. Sub-divisions of this dance include «зэхуэкIуэ кIыхь» (*zexwek'we ch'ih*) [long *zexwek'we*], and «щIалэгъуалэ зэхуэкIуэ» (*sch'aleghwale zexwek'we*) [*zexwek'we* of the youth]. [«ЗэфакIуэ» in Adigean]

«Ислэмей» (*Yislhemey*) [*Islamey*] is an energetic dance that was either introduced recently or adapted from an ancient dance form. It may be performed by a soloist, a group of dancers, or by a couple. Its meter is similar to that of «къафэ» (*qafe*), 6/8 for old versions and 2/4 for new. On its catchy melody and old meter, the Russian composer Mily Alexeyevich Balakirev (1837-1910) based his 'Islamey—Oriental Fantasy for piano', which he finished in five weeks on 13 September 1869. Balakirev's fascination with North Caucasian music goes back to 1863 when he visited the Caucasus. He fell in love with Circassian music and he wrote a number of musical pieces based on Kabardian folk songs.

Balakirev built this 'oriental gem', which is still performed today, around three themes: the first, 'allegro agitato', uses a fast repetitive dance rhythm in the Caucasian style, the middle part, 'andantino espressivo'—the central theme of the piece—was built up climactically, when a switch is made to 'allegro vivo'. This work was revised in 1902, when a new

passage was included between the first and second parts.<sup>65</sup> It was quite fitting that a great pianist, Shura Cherkassky, a descendant of the Russified Kabardian Cherkassky clan, performed on a recording of this work. [Islamey-Oriental Fantasy. Concert. Shura Cherkassky. Academy Sound & Vision. November 1968; re-issued: February 1985 (ALH9654ZCALH965)]

«**ЛьяпэпцИйуэ**» (*lhapepts'iywe*), or «**льяпэрисэу**» (*lhaperiysew*) — Dance *en pointe* — is one of the alluring features of Caucasian dance in general. This technique, only performed by male dancers, requires rigorous training and a perfect sense of balance. The Adigean version of the dance is «**льяпэрышьу**» (*lheberischw*).

«**Зыгьэльэт**» (*Zighelhet*) [the hop-flit] is a lively (Adigean) dance also performed by couples.

«**Лезгинкэ**» (*Lezghinka*), as the name indicates, is an energetic dance of the Lezghin people in Daghestan. It was borrowed in the Soviet period, but due to its vivaciousness and popularity it has been retained in the repertoire of most dance troupes in the Caucasus.

«**Удж**» (*Wij*) is an ancient (ritual) dance that has gone through the significance transformations. It has many varieties, including «удж хэш» (*wij xesh*), «удж пыху» (*wij pixw*), «удж хьурей» (*wij x'wrey*). It is nowadays performed by couples who go through the ancient ritual motions.

«**Хьурашэ**» (*X'wrashe*) is Shapsugh «удж». The Shapsugh are 'Black Sea' Circassians. There are about 20,000 Shapsugh in the area of Sochi, where the 2014 Winter Olympics will be held.

There are other specific dances associated with individuals or regions, or with other themes. Names of dances, such as Sozeresh (Соээрэш), Mezdegw (Мэздэгү), Elbrus (Еуашхьэмахуэ), etc., are choreographies devised in relatively recent times. The rites associated with the deity

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<sup>65</sup> More on the influence of Circassian dance melodies on classical music in the West and Russia can be found below.

Sozeresh obviously go back for millennia, but Kabardinka's dance is a modern depiction of the ancient ceremonies of the adoration of the god. Mezdegw refers to the dance style of the Christian Circassians who live in the area of Mezdegw in North Ossetia....



Dancing round a Fire/Cross in celebration of the Circassian New Year, 22 March 2007 in Nalchik. The round turf represents God's Field. The animist-cum-Christian rite is a phenomenon of the eclectic nature of the Circassian system of beliefs. The kindred Abkhazians are more avowedly animist-pagan, despite the fact that the majority are formally Christian, still clinging tenaciously to their old traditions and rituals.  
(Photograph courtesy of adygaunion.com)

### **Influence of Circassian dance melodies on classical music**

Circassian dance music influenced Russian, European, and American classical musicians in the 19th and 20th centuries. Amongst the more famous pieces composed on Circassian themes in the 19th century are: Johann Strauss's (1825-1899) 'Circassian March, op. 335'; (Franz) Liszt's (1811-1886) arrangement for piano of (Mikhail Ivanovich) Glinka's (1804-1857) 'March of the Circassians' (or 'Circassian March'), from *Ruslan and Ludmilla*; (Clément Philibert) Léo Delibes' (1836-1891) 'Circassian Dance' in the ballet suite *La Source* (1866); Willem Vandervell's 'Circassia: Graceful Dance ... for the pianoforte (solo and duet)'; Matthias von Holst's (circa 1770 - circa 1850) 'The Circassian Rondo. Rondo Circassien (composed & arranged for the pianoforte)' (1820; J. Balls, 1811); Wilhelm Iucho's 'Circassian Polka, op. 113, no. 3' (1854); Charles Louis Napoleon d'Albert's 'Circassian Polka for Pianoforte' (Chappell, 1865); Theodore Bonheur's 'Circassian Dance for the Pianoforte' (Francis, Day & Hunter, 1892); Kuhe Lindoff's 'The Circassian Polkas: Arranged as Duets for Two Performers on the Pianoforte' (1848); Robert Dyke's arrangement of 'Circassian Circle: Fife and Drum Band Parts' (1885); and J. Rivie's 'Circassian Quick March: Bugle Band Parts' (1877).

The number of music pieces composed on Circassian themes dropped significantly in the 20th century in the West due to the dispersion of the majority of Circassians in consequence of the Circassian-Russian War and the Iron Curtain that cut off the remaining Circassians from the rest of the civilised world. An example of compositions in this period include Percy Elliot's *Three Pieces for the Piano* [No. 1: Beau Brummel; No. 2: Asphodel; No. 3: The Circassian Dancer] (Reynolds & Co, 1928).

In contrast, Soviet music composers wrote many classical pieces on Circassian dance themes. In 1932, I. K. Shaposhnikov (1896-1953) composed 'Kabardian Dance for Symphony Orchestra'. In 1936, Arseni R. Abraamov (1886-1944) wrote two melodies 'Qafe' and 'Yishmey' for symphony orchestra, *Kabardian Symphonic Dances*, and the popular 'Kabardian March for Wind Orchestra'.



Despite the untold hardships borne by the people during World War II, it proved to be a great boon for the development of Circassian classical music. In the summer of 1942, the Soviet Government decided to transfer some of its best musicians, actors, artists and professors from Moscow to the relative safety of Kabarda. The musicians included Sergei Prokofiev, Nikolai Ya. Myaskovsky, Vasily V. Nechaev and Anatoly N. Aleksandrov, and many others.

It was there, in the primordial beauty and serenity of Kabarda, that Prokofiev got in touch with, and became enamoured with the folk music of the Circassians. According to him, 'Kabardian dances and songs are a goldmine of musical material.' Prokofiev's sojourn in Kabarda proved very productive, composing his *String Quartet No. 2 in F Major Op. 92 (On Kabardian Themes)*, in Nalchik in about five weeks in 1942. His aim was to achieve 'a combination of virtually untouched folk material and the most classical of classical forms, the string quartet.' The three movements were based on actual folk songs and dances, with the original harmonies and rhythms, and without musical adornments. In spite of running foul of the official critics, the work proved an immediate success when it was premiered by the famous Beethoven Quartet in Moscow on 5 September 1942.

The first movement ('Allegro sostenuto') was based on the ancient dance, Udzh Starikov, or Wijizch (уджыжь), heard at the beginning and on the song 'Sosriqwe' («Сосрыкъуэ»), in which three players create an accordion-like accompaniment to the song, sung by the violin. The second movement ('Adagio') was based on a Kabardian love song, 'Synilyaklik Zhir', sung by the cello in a high voice. The middle section, based on the folk dance 'Yislhemej' is in imitation of the sound of the Circassian fiddle. The movement ends with a brief return of the opening song. The third movement ('Allegro') was based on a traditional mountain melody known as 'Getegezhev Ogurbi' («ДЖЭТЭГЪЭЖЪХЭ ИЭГЪУРБИЙ»; *Jeteghezchxe 'Eghwrbiy*), alternating with two lyrical themes and a reminiscence of the first movement.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> 'Jeteghezchxe 'Eghwrbiy yi Ghibze' («ДЖЭТЭГЪЭЖЪХЭ ИЭГЪУРБИЙ»; 'The Elegy of 'Eghwrbiy Jeteghezch') is a well-known Kabardian lament. Three versions of the dirge (words and music sheets) are found in V. H.

In 1946, on the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Kabardian ASSR, Sergei N. Ryauzov (1905-1983) composed a symphonic suite based on three dances ‘Qafe’, ‘YisIhemey’ and ‘Wij’, which adhered closely to the original themes. In 1949, Truvor K. Sheibler (1900-1960) composed *Kabardian Dance Melody: A Suite for Symphony Orchestra*. Fyodor A. Silyakhin (b. 1912) wrote *Kabardian Dances* in 1950. Artemi G. Shakhgaldian (b. 1910) composed *Qafe: Pieces for Woodwind Instrumental Quartet* (1961).

Circassian classical composers who wrote classical dance pieces based on Circassian dance themes include Hesен Y. Qarden (Къардэн; Kardanov) (b. 1923), who wrote *Three Symphonic Dances* in 1960; Muhediyn F’. Bale (Балэ; Balov) (1923-1984), who composed *Five Symphonic Dances*, based on Kabardian, Adigean, Cherkess, Balkarian and Karachai melodies in 1961; Boris H. Teimirqan (Темыркъан; Temirkanov), who issued *Pieces for Symphony Orchestra and National Accordion on Themes of the Music of the Peoples of the Caucasus* in 1989; and Cherkess composer AsIhen Dawir (Даур Аслъэн; Aslan Daurov) (1940-1999), who wrote the symphony *The Circassians, Mountain Symphonic Dances* in 1983.

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Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1990, pp 114-20, 120-5, 425-8. Vladimir Bereghwn’s rendition of the first version (pp 114-20) is included on this webpage.



Symphony Orchestra in Adigea. (The Republic of Adygea, p19)

## Traditional Circassian Dance Party

### АДЫГЭ ДЖЭГУ

Partakers in a dance ceremony (джэгу; *jegw*) divided into two groups on the edge of the dance-floor, males on one side, females on the other. Music and song were supplied by the bards (джэгуакIуэ; *jegwak'we*). No one was allowed to sit while the dance was in progress, no matter how long it lasted. The two groups provided background and choral singing, but only the members of the male group clapped their hands in rhythm with the music. In the olden days, a bowl of «махъсмымэ» (*makhsima*) was passed round. The management of each group was assigned to a specialized class of individuals called «хъэтиякIуэ» (*'hetiyak'we'*), masters of (the dance) ceremonies, who were given presents for their work. If present at the guest quarters, professional bards took up the role of masters of ceremonies. Among the tasks of the master of ceremonies was to pick and match the dancers by pointing his decorated staff (хъэтиякIуэ баш; *hetiyak'we bash*).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The staffs (almost sceptre-like in appearance and splendour) were about a metre long and were made from the twigs of small (forest) hazel-nut trees and were decorated with threads and golden threads, passed through equidistant openings perforated along the staff. On the staff itself, and on each of the threads, seven hazel-nuts were pinned and tied. The ends of the threads were fringed. It is markworthy that the number seven had special significance in Circassian culture. The staff served several functions, including as a baton for the master of ceremonies to conduct the orchestra.



Circassian dance party.

A dance party was started with the stately slow dance «къафэ» (*qafe*),<sup>68</sup> and ended with the solemn round dance «удж» (*wij*), in accordance with the saying, «Джэгур къафэКІэ кыщІадзэри, уджКІэ яух» (*Jegwr qafech'e qisch'adzeriy, wijch'e yawix'*) [*'A dance party is started with «къафэ» (qafe), and ended with «удж» (wij)'*]. Male dancers had to follow the moves of their female partners and harmonize with them. A female dancer always stayed on the right of her partner, and never associated with dancers of lesser social rank.<sup>69</sup> When a prince joined a dance party and took the floor, the bards paid deference to his noble demeanour by playing songs associated with his family and lineage, clapping and chorus assuming more sober and measured rhythms.

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<sup>68</sup> «Къафэ» ('Qafe') is both a generic term for 'dance' and the name of a kind of dance.

<sup>69</sup> In accordance with the saying, «Зэхуэмыдэ кыызэдэфэкъым, зэмыфэгыу кыызэдэуджкъым» (*Zexwemide qizedefeqim, zemifeghw qizedewijqim'*) [*'Those dissimilar in their social rank do not dance the «къафэ» (qafe) and «удж» (wij) together'*].



Stylised depiction of Circassian dance party.

### **Dance troupes**

In the Soviet period, national dance academies were established. Traditional dance was modernized and professional choreography introduced. At first, the main institute specializing in Caucasian dance and choreography was the Tbilisi State Dancing College in Georgia. Circassian graduates went on to establish national troupes in their republics. Later, institutes were set up in Kabardino-Balkaria and Adigea, like the Professional Art College in Nalchik, which spawned a number of dance troupes.

The Kabardian Dance Ensemble, one of the first national troupes, was established in 1934. It started out as an amateur group, and attracted the best local dancers and musicians. The debut of the troupe was performed in the village of Zeyiqwe in the same year. The troupe was re-named the Kabardino-Balkarian State Song and Dance Ensemble. Arseni R. Abraamov developed part of its repertoire. In 1938, a choral group was added to the Ensemble, for which the cream of the republican musicians and poets, Abraamov, Truvor K. Sheibler, Ryauzov, Alim Ch'ischoqwe (Keshokov) and Ali Schojents'ik'w, combined to write new songs. The troupe was again re-named the National Folk Dance Ensemble 'Kabardinka'. The current official name of the troupe is 'Kabardinka Academic Dance Ensemble'. It is considered one of the finest dance troupes in the Caucasus, and has performed in the Russian Federation and abroad. Its repertoire includes many traditional dances with developed choreographs. These convey reserved inner temperament, majestic beauty and elegance—literally enchanting the spectators.





Kabardinka performing 'wij' in open air under the Kabardian sky.

Ancient Circassians would have proceeded to the forest across the river and danced round a venerable arbor.

Ritual dances were mainly performed in sacred groves and round people struck (hallowed) by lightening. (V. Vorokov, 1987, p175)

The debut of the State Dance Ensemble of Adigea took place on 1 May 1972 on the stage of the Pushkin Drama Theatre. Mahmud Beshkok, Honoured Artist of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, was one of the more influential choreographers. He published a book on Adigean folkloric dance in 1990. Another troupe of note is the Adigean State Academic Folk Dance Ensemble 'Nalmes', a folk song and dance



group which was set up in the early 1970s, although it was first established in the 1930s, but was later dissolved.<sup>70</sup>



The Adigean State Academic Folk Dance Ensemble 'Nalmes'.  
Established in 1936, 'Nalmes' sees itself as 'the collector,  
guardian, and interpreter of Adigean folk music and dancing'.

The 'vocalic' component of Nalmes separated in 1991 to form the Adigean State Folk Song Ensemble 'Yislhamiy'. 'Yislhamiy' («Ислхамый») is one of a number of folk song groups that keep the old bard traditions alive. It boasts of a varied and rich repertoire of ancient and traditional songs and dances. The Ensemble's mission also includes the rearrangement of folk songs and chants into modern formats to bestow contemporary relevance on them without sacrificing their authenticity and historical value. The Ensemble displayed its artistic wares in many festivals held in countries across Europe and Asia, and made several tours in countries where Circassian diasporas are concentrated. It celebrated its 15th anniversary in January 2006. Its

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<sup>70</sup> The website of 'Nalmes' <<http://www.nalmes.ru>>, offered in Russian and English, has been upgraded, and is very stylish and informative.

founder and artistic director is Aslhencheriy Nexay, People's Artist of the Russian Federation. The choreography of the Ensemble is designed by Viktoria Yedij. The Ensemble boasts of a number of world-class singers, including Susanna X'wak'we, Shemsudin Qwmiqw, Rim Schaw(e), and Saniyat Aghirjaneqwe (Agerzhanokova). Nevertheless, the repertoire of 'Yisthamiy' includes a number of classic dances. Both troupes –'Nalmes' and 'Yislhamiy' – went on tours in Russia, the Caucasus, Turkey, Syria and Jordan. The Adiga troupes introduced the world to the ancient and exotic national dances.

The Caucasus State Folk Dance Company was set up by Igor Atabiev ('Etebiy) in 1992. Atabiev represents the new generation of choreographers who combine academic excellence with folkloric flare. The troupe continues the Soviet era tradition of presenting dances from many regions of the Caucasus.

The National Dance Ensemble 'Hetiy' («Хьэтий»; 'Khatti') is a troupe of young and talented musicians and dancers, whose music, costumes, and choreography are just out of this world. Their rendition of the dance 'Mezdegw' («Мэздэгү») is one of the highlights of Circassian dance, showcasing very fancy and elaborate footwork.<sup>71</sup> The musical director of the elegant ensemble is Zubeir Yewaz (Еуаз Зубер; Evazov), who represents the new generation of traditionalists. Yewaz studied the Circassian violin in Nalchik and has done work on collecting folk songs and melodies. He collaborated with Ziramikw Qardenghwsch' to preserve twelve Ubykh melodies, which he personally performs. He is also the artistic director of the Sirin Ensemble, which has a repertoire of ancient and traditional songs and melodies played on authentic Circassian instruments (no accordion or baraban). These two groups play an important role in the dissemination and propagation of the Circassian musical lore amongst the young.

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<sup>71</sup> A video file of the dance 'Mezdegw' by Hetiy is available on the web <<http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&videoID=2029125517>>. The Internet is full of great specimens of Circassian dancing.



Two members of the National Dance Ensemble 'Hetiy' on top of the Caucasus Mountains. (Courtesy of adygaunion.com)



In the diaspora, dance is the main, and often the only, manifestation of national folklore. In many societies it is the activity most identified with Adiga culture and is readily associated with it by non-Circassians, perhaps to the detriment of other folkloric genres.



Al-Ahli Circassian Dance Troupe 'Kuban'  
performing under Royal patronage in Amman/Jordan  
in March 2009.

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as] to meet'), 'Qesey', 'Qafe', 'Kabardinka', 'Mezgwasche', and 'Wij'. Tiqwe, a Cherkess, is currently the President of the Union of Composers of the Republic of Adigea and is an accomplished and versatile composer and musician. He wrote about 300 folkloric and classical works, including a few opuses for traditional musical instruments. He is an ardent advocate of going back to the roots, to revive ancient music genres and present them in original forms.]

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# АДЫГЭ СОЦИОЛОГИЕ

## Circassian Sociology

### The Social Structure of the Circassians

**T**HE social structure of Circassian society was extremely complex and was generally based on hierarchical feudalism. A few egalitarian tribes existed in the mountainous regions of Western Circassia. These were socially differentiated from the other Western Adiga of the plains and were characterized by absence of any caste system.

The age of feudalism in Circassia may have started as early as the fourth century AD, becoming fully established by the 14th. In feudal societies, laws enshrined in the ubiquitous Xabze (Хабзэ), which was differentiated according to class, regulated the rights and duties of each caste and defined class inter-relations. Disputes and contentions were looked into by ad hoc councils whose jurisdiction ended after resolving the cases at hand.

Circassian feudalism is reminiscent of the feudal systems that dominated Western Europe in the Middle Ages. Common characteristics like societal stratification into aristocratic and common castes and the sacred law of chivalry tempt one to place Adiga society in the continuum of European feudalism. However, Circassian society was more fragmented than its counterparts in Europe. Whereas the ultimate, and only, allegiance was to the local prince in Adiga society, the knights of Europe were engulfed in a multitude of allegiances and sub-allegiances, although all swore fealty to one monarch.

The feudal system came to a tragic end in 1864 when Russia conquered Circassia. On 31 July, the triumphant tsar issued an edict prohibiting



slavery. Eight days later, the princes and noblemen let go of their bondsmen. Slavery in the Caucasus, which had existed for millennia, was no more. However, the institution was taken by the Circassians to the diaspora, where it survived for a few decades after.

Towards the end of the 18th century, a series of upheavals rocked some parts of Western Circassia. In 1770, a twenty-year class war erupted in Abzakhia (the land of the Abzakh) that resulted in the extermination of the princely caste and the banishment of most of the nobility. Encouraged by the success of their easterly brethren, the Shapsugh masses overthrew their overlords at the beginning of the 19th century in a bloodless coup. Curiously enough, many of those deposed opted to live in exile in Russia roughly at the same time as the French aristocrats found refuge in the tsarist empire.

Despite the fact that before Russian conquest Circassia had barely advanced beyond feudalism, there were indications that by the end of the 18th century some segments of Circassian society were becoming aware of the advantages of modernity and progress. Through mercantile and cultural contacts first with the Europeans, especially the Genoese, and then with the Ottomans, the rudiments of civil society were slowly but surely taking root. According to Paul B. Henze: 'After the Georgians and the Armenians, the Circassians came closest of all the Caucasian peoples to developing the prerequisites for nationhood. They had traditions of roots extending back to the dawn of recorded history' (1992, p67).

Adiga civilization was at its most crucial phase of development at the end of the 18th century. It needed the goodwill of Fate. Moira turned her head! It was one of the harshest ironies of Circassian history that, as this realization was dawning on the Adiga, Russia launched its war that pushed the nation to the brink of extinction.

### **Clan divisions**

The pyramidal clan structure ensured the existence of many social units, internally cohesive, but whose inter-cohesion was, at best, suspect. With very few exceptions, no one prince was powerful enough to subdue the others in order to establish central authority. A state of anarchy pervaded Circassia which many of its neighbours took advantage of (C.

Lemercier-Quelquejay, 1984, p26). The title of king was never coined in recent Circassian history, although some of the more ambitious princes made strong bids to mint it. The only case worthy of mention is that of Prince Inal Nexw (the Great; also Inal Nef, in reference to his blindness in one eye), who founded a strong state extending over the whole of Circassia and some of the adjoining regions in the first half of the 15th century AD. However, his reign did not last long, and his dominion fell apart after his death. The case of prince Temryuk, who ruled Kabarda in the period 1554-1571/2, and his courting of the favour of Tsar Ivan the Terrible by betrothing his daughter Gwascheney to him in 1561 to cement the so-called 'Union' between Russia and Kabarda, is illustrative of this point.

It is safe to assume that many Kabardian princes refused to accept this unholy alliance as it brought no advantage to them. In the 1563-66 civil war between Temryuk and his principal rivals, Pschi'epschoqwe and his brothers Tazryut and Maet,<sup>72</sup> Tsar Ivan IV sided with his father-in-law, contributing a motley contingent of boyars, Cossacks and Circassian archers with Prince Mamstryuk, son of Temryuk. It would seem that for some time, at least till the flare up of hostilities between the Tatars and Ottomans on one hand and the Russians on the other, in 1569, Temryuk managed to become the most powerful Kabardian prince, even controlling parts of the Shamkhal's Tarki state in Daghestan. This is the closest that the Kabardians had ever got to establishing a centralized state after the time of Inal the Great.

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<sup>72</sup> Pschi'epschoqwe (Pshchiapschoqwe) Qeitiqwe (Къетыкъуэ ПшыІэпщокъуэ [Пшыапщокъуэ]; 1540-1580) was Prince of Western Kabarda. He was grandson of Beislhen son of Zhanx'wet (son of Table son of Inal the Great).

### **Examples of upper-class structures**

Because of their small sizes and tractability, the upper classes of the Hetiqwey and Mokhosh are described as examples of the feudal structure of the princely and noble classes. For larger nations, like the Kabardians, an extremely large volume would be required.

### **The Hetiqwey (Хьэтыкъуей)**

#### ***Princely clans:***

Hetiqwe (Хьэтыкъуэ)

In three villages:

Zancharey yi qwaj ( Village of Zancharey ), on the Laba.

Selton yi qwaj.

Zankklish yi qwem yi qwaj ( Village of Son of Zankklish), on the River Psizch ( Kuban).

#### ***Noble clans:***

Sobepshi. In Sobai village of on the Shkhakqwashash river.

Khapsepsi in the village of Khapai, in Cherchenay territory.

Padisay. In the village of Padisay on the Kuban (emigrated en masse to Turkey at end of 19th century).

## The Mokhosh (Мэхъуэш)

Table 1. shows the only princely Mokhosh family, the village which it inhabited and the river on which it lied. The last entry was the prince contemporary of Khan-Girey.

Beyxgarsoqwexe ( <i>xe</i> is plural suffix)	Sozeriqway	Farz	Bayzroqw
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Table 2: Noble families of the Mokhosh clan

Name of noble family	Name of village of residence	Name of river
Shx'appatsoqw ( <i>qw</i> , son, is Kiakh equivalent of Kabardian <i>qwe</i> )	Shx'appatsoqwim yi Qwaj (Village of Shx'appatsoqw )	Farz
Mamizch-xe	Mamizch-Habl	Farz
Neytrbiy-xe	Neytrbiy-Habl	Farz
Mef'edz-xe	Mef'dziy	Psifir
Toxg-xe	Toxg-Habl	Psifir
Ashnashoqw-r	Ashnashoqway	Qeilh
Leybxgoqw-r	Leybxgoqway	Qeilh
Deychiqw-r	Deychiqway	Qeilh
Ortsey-r	Ortsey-Habl	Qeilh

### Principal & noble congresses

Notwithstanding fragmentation, in times of national crises the princes formed a coalition of sorts under a prince of exceptional leadership qualities. The Kabardians could not have held their own in face of the incessant menaces posed by the powers that coveted their lands throughout the Middle Ages, had they remained disunited. The supreme

leader was elected in separate assemblies of the two upper classes by popular vote. He was invested with the title 'Pschim Yapsch' ('пщым япщ'='Prince of Princes') or 'Pschishxwe' ('пщышхуэ'='Great Prince'). However, his period of tenure terminated with the expiry of threat. Then things went back to the way they were. Among the most famous of these chiefs were Inal the Great of Kabarda and Prince Bolatoqwe of the Kemirgoy (or Temirgoy, one of the Western Circassian tribes; self-designation: КIэмгуй, Ch'emgwy), one of his offspring.

The Circassians had three kinds of congresses. At the level of a single principedom, the local prince chaired the meeting, which was held away from inhabited areas, preferably by the edge of a forest or in a field, for privacy. If two or more princes were involved, the meeting place was carefully chosen, treachery figuring high on the list of things to guard against. National questions were deliberated on and decisions made by two congresses, one of princes, the other of noblemen. Each was chaired by the oldest chief. In all kinds of congresses, the two groups were placed at some distance from each other, with special officers liaising in between. In Lesser Kabarda, some meetings took place in villages.

The proceedings were conducted with dignity. Each 'house' had its spokesmen or orators, and deputation frequently passed from the one to the other. Deputies were selected from the elders of the noble class.

### **Property**

Land and serfs were owned collectively. The clan was not divided into nuclear families and all obeyed the eldest member of the clan. In one system of inheritance, property was not devolved from father to son but from brother to brother. In another, the whole estate went to the eldest son. This system produced a surplus of dispossessed warriors some of whom sought their fortunes outside their country. In the absence of male heirs, a prince's daughter transmitted the principality to her spouse upon her father's demise. One peculiarity of Circassian law was that the statutory limit for litigation of inheritance cases could extend to forty years after death.

### **The judiciary**

Courts and arbitration councils meted out justice in accordance with the Xabze (Хабзэ). The first courts were established by prince Inal the Great in the Middle Ages. He set up forty judicial houses spread across his empire. These institutions survived until 1427 AD. Prince Beslan of Greater Kabarda reformed the judicial system and established courts of cassation in large towns, which were headed by noblemen of unblemished records, and with two or three members. These courts, which were called *Xeyzisch' Xase* (хейзыщI хасэ; Congresses of Innocence), looked into everyday matters. Weighty cases and issues of national importance were looked upon personally by the prince in his supreme court. Beslan's legacy survived until the early years of the 19th century.

### **Downfall of feudalism**

After the pacification of Kabarda in the 1820s, there followed major societal imbalances that eventually destroyed the traditional class structure. With loss of independence, princes were faced with a very difficult situation. Their suzerainty over neighbouring peoples came to an end and with this loss of tributes. Pillaging campaigns also came to a stop, thus an end to spoils of war. Thirdly, in the 1830s to 50s, a deep economic recession hit the country, which added to the woes of the princes. The only remaining income to sustain the upper classes was the rent paid by the peasants, but this was not enough to maintain the turgid caste.

The noblemen's main task was to accompany the prince on his expeditions. In the new circumstances they found themselves out of work. First rate warriors they might have been, but when it came to fending for themselves, they were at a complete loss. Many came down from their high horses, literally, and started to learn how to till the land. Many of them went to neighbouring regions looking for work. This fall from grace brought them an unforeseen mishap. They were taken for serfs, since they did the same work. Some unscrupulous princes took advantage of the situation and started to claim that their vassals were serfs and demanded that emancipation money be paid for their release from service. Many cases were tried in court.

The Russian conquest and mass expulsion irrevocably undid the caste system. Most of the upper classes immigrated to the Ottoman Empire before the end of the War, and they actively sought to have their erstwhile subjects follow them to re-establish the class system in the diaspora. There is no point being a prince if there is no roast to rule. In Turkey there were violent clashes between the princes and nobles on one side and bondsmen on the other in 1876-7 near Çorlu (Tcherkeskoy, near Istanbul), which ended only when government forces came between the warring parties. That conflict hastened the dismantling of the last major strongholds of class distinction.

During the Soviet period, the remnants of the upper classes were treated as pet bug-bears and were oftentimes persecuted as enemies of the people when the state wanted to renew its reason for being. Many dissidents were readily condemned by being falsely accused of belonging to the princely or noble classes. On the other hand, evidence of feelings of superiority stemming from 'white bone' was recorded as late as the early 1960s among Circassians in Jordan [*see* G. H. Weightman, 1961]. One is hard-pressed to find families that own up to their slave past, the matter still being of a highly sensitive nature.

### **Egalitarian societies**

After the prolonged war in Abzakhia and the bloodless coup in Shapsughia, a new social order obtained that ushered in new ideas of equality and democracy. Gone were the princes and many of the noblemen. However, some of the nobility stayed, acting as arbiters. Leaders, *themada* (тхьэмәдә), were elected by all adult members of a clan in an open vote. This system ensured that persons of the highest calibre reached the top of the executive ladder. Unsatisfactory performance was censored by special councils that had the right to divest leaders of their powers. Legislative councils enacted laws that regulated the everyday life of the people. Again, members of these councils were democratically elected.

This unique experiment in pluralism was still in its infancy when it was rudely challenged by Russian ambition in the 1830s. By the end of the

war not only was it nipped in the bud, but also the clans that had adopted it all but disappeared from the Caucasus.



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## Social Hierarchy in Eastern Circassia: The Kabardian Class System

The Kabardians had the most elaborate class structure among the Circassians. The classical Eastern Circassian hierarchical system is shown in the following table:

	<b>Пщы (Pschi)</b> 'Prince'	
<b>Мырзэ (Mirze)</b> 'Offspring of equally ranked parents'		<b>Тумэ (Tume)</b> 'Children of unequally ranked parents'
	<b>Уэркъ (Werq)</b> 'Nobility, Courtiers, Vassals'	
<b>Лакъуэлэш</b> (L'aqwel'esh) 'Most Noble=duke'	<b>Гудэс (Gwdes)</b> (literally: 'Carriage- Riders') 'Nobility of foreign origin'	<b>Дыжбыныкъуэ</b> (Dizchiniqwe) 'Less Noble=earl'
	<b>ЛъхукъуэлI</b> (Lhxwqwel') 'Freemen and peasants'	
<b>УнэIут (Wine'wt),</b> <b>Унэзехъэ</b> (Winezeihe) 'Menial; Housemaid'	<b>ЛакъуэлI</b> (L'aqwel'); <b>Лакъуэнпыт</b> (L'aqwenpit); <b>Унэпыт (Winepit);</b> <b>ЛыщIэ (L'isch'e)</b> 'Bond peasants, Serfs'	<b>ПщантIэдэт</b> (Psch'ant'edet) 'Hand'; <b>ПщылI (Pschil')</b> 'Slave'

Classical Kabardian hierarchical system.

In the 16th century, Prince Beslan (Beislhen) Zhanx'wetoqwe (Беслъэн Жанхъуэтокъуэ; nicknamed 'ПцIапцIэ' ['Pts'apts'e']='The Obese') restructured the five-layered classical social strata of Kabardian nobility and lower classes, without touching upon the principal caste. According to Shora B. Negwme (Nogmov), the nobility was divided into five subclasses, the commoners into four. It is interesting to note that the new structure came to resemble the English peerage system. Thus, the nobles were divided into: *l'aqwel'esh* (л'акъуэлIэш), corresponding to duke, *dizchinqwe* (дыжъыныкъуэ), equivalent to marquis, *gwdes* (гудэс), earl, or the Continental count, *pschi-werq* (пщы-уэркъ), viscount, *werq* (уэркъ), baron. The lower classes were divided into *pschischawe* (пщыщайуэ; prince's lad), *l'aqweschawe* (л'акъуэщайуэ; clan-lad), *l'aqwel'* (л'акъуэлI; clansman), *wine'wt* (унэIут; menial, literally: 'standing by the house') and *pschil'* (пщылI; slave, literally: 'prince's man').

### **The Principal Class**

Each tribe was divided into princedoms, which were effectively independent, although there was a council of princes, which met at times of national crises. At the apex of each principality stood the prince who wielded almost absolute power over his subjects, who were considered as his property. The title of prince was hereditary, never acquired or bestowed. Although absolute power usually led to complete corruption, it was in the prince's interest to gain his vassals' unquestioned loyalty, which virtue was of the greatest essence in feudal society. Treason, the great underminer, was severely punished.

Investiture and deprivation of titles were in the hands of the princes. The lord of the manor was expected by his noblemen and subjects to adhere rigorously to the code of chivalry. A feeble or undisciplined prince soon found himself with very few followers indeed. In extreme cases, a prince was deprived of his title and demoted to a lower class. The first recorded sentence of this kind was pronounced against a prince belonging to the Kabarda Tambiy (Тамбий) family, who was reduced to dukehood.

No intermarriage was allowed between the upper classes and the 'commoners.' This law was strictly adhered to, to preserve blue blood. There were some instances of intermarriage between the nobles and the

princely caste. The male offspring of the prince were classed as either *mirze* (мырзэ) or *tume* (тумэ), according to the rank of the spouse. The first was a result of an equal marriage, the other of a *mésalliance*.

Modes of address and salutes were of special importance. Nuances of Etiquette were so fine that many a foreign traveller missed their significance. The lord of the manor, be he prince or nobleman, was addressed 'Ziywis-hen' ('зиусхьэн'), or 'Dotenexw' ('дотэнэху'), his sons only by the latter. The lady of the house was called 'Gwasche' ('гуашцэ'), a term later demoted to denote the female head of an ordinary household, and the unmarried daughter of a prince 'Zhan' ('жан'). 'Dote' ('дотэ') was later used as an honorary nickname given to a respected man by his younger relatives.

The name of a principality derived from that of the ruling family, the constituent regions taking theirs from the reigning noble clans. Princedoms varied in size from small hamlets to family congregations of a few dozen villages. In Kabarda, where the most stable feudal system in Circassia had existed, the most powerful princes exercised their dominion over a few thousand subjects. For example, in the 16th/17th centuries, Prince Sanjalay, who sired seven sons and two daughters, had 400 men in his town and a further 600 Tatars in Otary.<sup>73</sup> Oleguk and Hatikuk with their brothers had more than fifty villages between them, and they could muster around 1,000 cavalymen and more than 2,000 serfs.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Sanjalay (Сэнджэлей) was Prince Teimriqwe Yidar's (Темрыкъуэ Идар; Temriuk Idarov; father of Maria (Circassian name=Гуашцэней, Гуашцэнэ), wife of Ivan the Terrible) younger brother's grandson. Prince Sanjalay's father was Qanqilish (Къанкъылыш) son of Zhileghwet (Жылэгъуэт). In Russian sources he is referred to as 'Sunchaley Yanglichev' ('Сунчалей Янгличев'). He was appointed leader of the Terek Fortress and military camp north of present-day Grozny, capital of Chechnya. Sanjalay died in 1625. Many of his progeny also distinguished themselves as military leaders. Prince Grigory Senchuleevich Cherkassky was one of his sons.

<sup>74</sup> B. Nolde, 1952-53, p312.

## The Nobility

Next to the principal caste came the nobles, who were divided into the proper and lesser nobility, and the vassals who were given a free hand in their fiefdoms in return for their allegiance. They paid no taxes, but were expected to take part as cavalry in expeditions mounted by the princes.

A nobleman had the right to leave the service of a prince and join another principality. The *ataliqate* institution, whereby the children of the princes were entrusted at an early age to the vassals to be raised and trained in a military fashion, played a major role in strengthening the relationship between the prince and his nobles. Attached to princes and noblemen were a group of attendants and retainers. In descending order, there were squires, sergeants, yeomen, bedels, or town-criers (*ghwo*; гъуо), batmen (*sch'ak'wezeihe*; шIakIyэзехьэ), armour-bearers (*'eschezeihe*; Iэщэзехьэ), swains, grooms, and, at the bottom of the ladder, the pages.

Princes who took refuge in Circassia were allowed to retain their titles and were treated with great deference. However, they were excluded from the ruling elite, and did not take part in national deliberations. After the conquest of the Crimea by the Russians, many Tatars, the erstwhile enemies, found a safe haven among the Adiga, and their khans kept their titles. Resident noblemen of foreign origin were called *gwdes* (гудэс=carriage-riders), the Circassians not acknowledging their knightly status.

Despite their privileges, the nobility were under many obligations, a classic case of *noblesse oblige*. *Werg xabze* (уэркъ хабзэ) was the most developed and rigid of all the caste codes of behaviour. This class acted as the liaison between a prince and his people, and as such proper conduct was essential to ensure smooth running of the principality.

## The Commoners

Below the nobility came the freemen and free peasants who formed the largest class and constituted the workhorse of Adiga traditional economy. Agriculture, husbandry, crafts, manufacture were some of the activities members of this caste engaged in. Serfs could be freed in exchange for particular services. Peasants made up the infantry of a



prince's army, but were not allowed to don coats of arms (Wanderer, 1883, p25).

Slaves sold outside the country could go back to Circassia and redeem themselves if they chose to do so. They could even acquire estates and serfs of their own. Their descendants were also born free and could aspire to promotion to the noble ranks upon merit. Serfs could also redeem themselves and become commoners, in which case they were called '*(pschil) azet*' ('[пщыл] азэт').

### **The Lower Classes**

Thanes held land of noblemen by military service. Bond peasants, or serfs, were free to cultivate their plots in return for services rendered to the nobility. They had to work the lord's fields and, according to old custom, were obliged to pay their master fixed amounts of rent in kind. For example, at the beginning of the 19th century the rate in Kabarda was 14 sacks of millet for each pair of bulls used. Every bondsman possessed a small herd of domestic animals over which the lord of the manor had no rights.

Serfs were obliged to defend the manor against outside attack and accompany the lord on his campaigns, serving as military attendants. They were at liberty to leave the estate and re-establish themselves elsewhere upon paying redemption price. A prince had the right to sell his serfs as a form of punishment for a gross misdemeanour, but only after securing a judgement from a special council.

At the base of the pyramid were the menials, slaves, the(o)ws ('slaves' in Old English) and villeins, knaves, drudges, scullions and so on. These were mainly taken from war captives, as were the thralls in Anglo-Saxon England. In addition, a stranger venturing into the country without a bona fide *konak* (къуенакъ; host, protector) could soon find himself in bondage. Slaves could be either kept in the manor or sold. The prince secured suitable matches for his slaves to augment their number, and hence his wealth. Runaway serfs were called '*qwlkeshx'en*' ('къулькэшхэн').

The rigidity of the class structure and the lack of mobility between the lower and upper castes had produced some differentiation in the 'ethnic composition' of the classes, and hence in physiognomy. The aristocrats, especially the princes, preserved 'white bone' (*qwpschhe xwzch*, кѳупщхѳ хужь; the Circassian equivalent of 'blue blood'), whereas there was a certain degree of racial blending among freedmen and serfs. Foreign war captives started their new lives as slaves, marrying within their caste. Many of them remained within the bounds of the slavish class, but some more ambitious ones were able to buy back their freedom. To this day, some families are still aware of their foreign origin.

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## Circassian Family Life

### Historical familial structures

Classical Circassian society went through two phases of gender domination. There is some evidence that the society was initially matriarchal, later transforming to patriarchy when the physically more powerful males sought to overturn the tables. According to Maxime Kovalevsky (1893), there were some aspects of the customs and traditions of the Circassians that could only be explained by assuming an antecedent matriarchal society. He constructed a model of Circassian society in which confraternities were the basic units of social structure. These prescribed exogamous marriage, and the ‘bought’ bride became a communal possession. Circassian custom had it that a widow was obliged to remarry one of the brothers of her deceased husband. In Kovalevsky’s model, the widow was only able to remarry outside the group if she could redeem her price. Otherwise, any member of the confraternity could claim her. The offspring of the union were considered those of the deceased.

In the seminal tale ‘The Council of the Matriarchs’ of the Nart Epic, we learn that:

... in the olden times, there was the Council of Matriarchs, which was made up of wise and far-sighted mature ladies. The Council discussed the day-to-day issues of the young Narts, and legislated laws and customs by which the youth had to abide in their mundane life. The Council members relied on their long experience and perspicacity in formulating relevant edicts.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> From original Bzchedighw text, in Asker Hedeghel’e (compiler and editor), *НАРТХЭР: АДЫГЭ ЭПОС. Nartxer: Adige Épos. Narti: Adigski épos* [The Narts: Circassian Epos, Vol. 7], Maikop: The Adigean Science and Research Institute, 1971, p106.

In other tales, marking the transformation to patriarchy, the formidable Nart Nesren Zchach'e (Нэсрэн ЖъакIэ) expressed his refusal to obey and swear allegiance to Lady Satanay, imploring the Narts to appoint a male leader.

Kovalevsky cited the legend of the Amazons in Circassian oral tradition as the record of transition to patriarchy. The Amazons and Circassians had been engaged in continual war. One day, the former resolved to enter into parleys with the latter. The queen of the Amazons spent a few hours in Prince Toulmey's tent, and came out intent on putting an end to the futile conflict. She declared that war was over and she announced her betrothal to her erstwhile adversary. She advised her followers to follow suit and pair with Circassian warriors. They took her counsel—and there an end to matriarchal rule. In Kovalevsky's estimation, the temporary union between groups of men and women of different societies preceded the patriarchal custom of life-long marriage consecrated by vows of fidelity. He considered male domination as a later development in Circassian society.

Some Western travellers of the 18th and early 19th centuries commented on the looseness of sexual morals in Circassian society, being unable to appreciate fully the complex social processes at work. According to them, for a married woman to have a lover, *sch'ase* [шIасэ], was not considered as a shame. In fact, husbands felt proud and were flattered that other men admired their wives and took interest in them.

Incest was prohibited a very long time ago. The Nart Epos preserved ancient tales that provide a vestige of those far away days when this practice was not yet tabooed. Circassian traditions took the prohibition to the extreme. Prospective couples were supposed not to be related up to the seventh forefather. Many men chose their partners from outside the village. It would seem that the ancient Circassians were aware of the detrimental effects of close-relation marriages.

### **Traditional family life**

The Circassian clan was not divided into nuclear families. The normal familial unit was the extended household (yHэзэхэс; *winezexes*) consisting of a father and his married sons,. The head of the family was

loath to allow sons-in-law to demur in his house, in accordance with the saying ‘*Malhx’esch, zhip’ew wineghw wimisch*’ («Мальхъэщ, жыпIэу унэгъу умышI»; Say not ‘He’s my son-in-law’, and take him into your house). All obeyed the eldest member of the clan.

Avoidance customs entailed the prohibition of association of some members of the same family. Siblings avoided fraternizing in private and in public. If a person approached a group of people and he saw one of his brothers in the group, then, according to seniority of age, he either walked away from the group, or joined it, whilst the junior bid his leave. This custom was sanctioned to lessen sibling rivalry. Some vestiges of this custom can still be evidenced in the Caucasus and in the diaspora.

A man avoided being seen in public with his wife at all costs, although the severity of proscription eased with old age. Females walked behind their male co-ambulators. It was unseemly to talk about a man’s wife in his presence or inquire after her health. A man was loath to call his wife by her name in the presence of strangers or household members. He never mentioned her in conversations with outsiders. A newly married man had to devise ingenious plans to visit the bedroom of his bride.

A wife did not sit in the presence of her spouse unless he gave her permission to do so. She never called her parents-in-law, husband, or her brothers-in-law by their names. In the last case, she used pet names (пщыкъуэцIэ; *pschiqwets’e*) to refer to them, for example ‘ДыгъэцIыкIу’ (*Dighets’ik’w*) [‘Little Sun’]. It was a secretive appellation that she never divulged outside the family circle. A saying prevalent in the olden times was ‘ПщыкъуэцIэ мыхъуамэ, къыджелэ щэхур!’ (*Pschiqwets’e mix’wame, qidzhei’e schexwr!*)—‘Tell us your secret, if it isn’t the pet name of your brother-in-law!’ Among the upper classes, it was considered a mark of courtesy that when the names of a woman’s husband, father, or elder brothers were mentioned, she stood up. Mothers usually used shortened forms of their children’s names to call them by. In some cases, totally different names of a more childish nature were used.

The ordering of Circassian personal names reflected the tribal structure of a society which laid more emphasis on a person’s clannish

background rather than his individuality. Thus, the name was transposed, with the family name coming first and the first name last! In less formal settings, the patronym took precedence over the first name. For example, in the tale 'Sosriqwe Fetches Fire,' some Narts were addressed by invoking the patronym in the first instance—son of Ashe, Ashemez, son of X'imisch, Baterez. A class of surnames has a patronymic form obtained by adding the suffix *-qwe* 'son' to a personal name, e.g. Zhiloqwe, Hevzhoqwe, Themoqwe. Another onomastic nicety had to be observed. When the said suffix was added to a nominal stem, it was the preceding vowel which indicated whether the compound was a personal or family name. An *-i-* marked the former, *-o-* the other. For example, Ch'isch*i*qwe, son of Ch'isch, vs. Ch'isch*o*qwe, clan or family of Ch'isch; Ghwch'epsch*i*qwe vs. Ghwch'epsch*o*qwe (J. Kokov, 1983, p6).

In the Soviet period, Russianized forms of family names gained importance, and even supremacy, especially in the official spheres. These forms were standardized, and were usually made up of the Russian patronymic *-ov/-ova* suffixed to the nearest Russian renderings of the original names. In works on onomastics, such as J. Kokov's, Circassian surnames are usually followed by their Russian versions. Thus, two designations were associated with each person, one 'ethnic,' used within the national group, the other formal. This legacy, still prevalent today, makes it almost impossible for an outsider to recognize nationality from the name.

The relationship between father and children, especially his sons, was characterized by sternness, bordering on severity, on the part of the father and absolute obedience on the part of the progeny. The father did not show any emotion towards his offspring except to vent his anger on them whenever untoward behaviour needed to be rectified. Holding and fondling them was out of the question. He never called them by their names in the presence of strangers. A son was forbidden to sit in his father's presence. He only spoke when he was asked to by the patriarch. A small boy was not allowed to make his presence in front of his grandfather or his uncles until he had reached manhood.

When there were no guests in the house, the head of the family ate first either on his own or with his grandchildren. Nobody else was allowed to



sit with him. When he had his fill and left the table, the other members of the household would have their meal. Such was the reverence for the elders.

Each family used to have a unique symbol, *damighe* (ДАМЫГЪЭ), which was cut out on belongings and used as a decoration pattern and to brand cattle. No family was allowed to use another's. The allocation of these emblems was the prerogative of the Council of the Nobles. These signs were first found in the Bosporan Kingdom, dated to the first century AD, inscribed on the walls of underground tombs or on ritual objects. It is known that the Sarmatians adopted these symbols and used them to brand their personal possessions, the ritualistic significance being lost. Later they took them to Poland, where they may have served as the bases for the heraldic clan symbols of the old Polish nobility. It may be that these signs were of local Caucasian origin, first adopted by the Bosporan Greeks and later by the Sarmatians, who then spread them across Eastern Europe. Two hundred and twelve of these ancient Circassian emblems with short accounts were collected and published in Cairo by Mustafa Lakhshoqwe in 1892, and republished in Yussef Izzat Pasha's book *The History of the Caucasus*, which came out in Istanbul in 1933. Kh. Kh. Yakhtanigov (Yex'tenij) collected Circassian and North Caucasian family emblems and published the impressive collection in 1993.

Despite the relative dominance of the male sex, women in Circassian society in general enjoyed a relatively good position, perhaps unparalleled by any other 'Eastern' people. Girls were not secluded, but enjoyed most of the pastimes of the boys. They were neither shy nor ill at ease in other people's company, and they served guests and strangers. A woman was free to choose her marriage partner. Coercion was rare. The father did not usually interfere in the matter, the mother making the proper arrangements with her daughter. There were exceptions as there always is. A suitor was allowed to visit a maid's house so that the couple would have the chance to get to know one another before making the binding decision. Divorce was rare and the eastern habit of taking second and more wives was frowned upon.

The Russian newspaper *Segodnya* published results of research on the lives and problems of Russian women in a special supplement in 1994. It

was found that the position of women in Kabardino-Balkaria and the Karachai-Cherkess Republic was significantly better in many respects than the Russian average.

Circassian society placed a great premium on lean female figure, and in order to ensure that girls attained this ideal they were fed sparingly, their diet consisting of milk and boiled millet cakes. On the negative side, the slave trade, in place from time immemorial up to the conquest, had detracted from the status of women, at least those who belonged to the lower classes.

### **Charity & social work**

Within each clan or fraternity co-operation was essential to maintain a strong community. Social work and voluntary institutions were well developed. Mutual help, the backbone of a social safety net, ensured that the poorest families had decent abodes to live in. In times of calamities, people were never at a loss for places at which they would be put up in comfort. This mutual aid system was, and still is, prevalent in the whole North Caucasus. When Russian forces attacked Grozny in 1994-96, many Chechen residents were able to evacuate to relative comfort in the countryside, whereas the poor Russian citizens had to bear the brunt of the bombings for weeks.

After the rites associated with a new harvest, people were at liberty to donate part of the crop to the poor. This obsolete custom was called *sejit* (сэджыт). According to a defunct custom called ‘*chirbishghezh*’ («чырбышгъэж»; literally: ‘adobe drying’), some Sundays were devoted to manufacture of adobe. Another tradition of note was *sch’ihexw* (щыхъэху), which was not unlike an American bee. Residents of a neighbourhood volunteered a day for house building, usually to accommodate indigent families. As befits a martial society, every member of which was expected to carry arms and defend his homestead, poorer residents of a community were given assistance in procuring personal weapons.

### **Tsarist & Soviet periods**

During the Tsarist period, no attempts were made by the Russians to undermine the traditional structure of the Circassian family, and no substantive changes were evinced. Russia was too busy consolidating her

hold on the newly conquered lands, by resettling the tribes, and infusing the area with new Cossack and Russian settlers.

The Soviet system brought on a new set of rules concerning the structure of the ideal Soviet family. All people were expected to converge to this paragon. The age of consent was fixed at 18 for men and 16 for women. Marriage was contracted at a registry office with a lay person officiating. Divorce was initially easy to obtain. However, lax rules gave unscrupulous men the opportunity to gratify their carnal desires quickly and cheaply. The sanctity of married life was compromised. However, bowing to public outcry, authorities made divorce procedures more stringent.

During the first few years of communist rule, the family system remained intact, that is until the onset of collectivization in 1928-29. This period was characterized by great upheavals. Some aspects of traditional village life were disrupted, and the villagers were forced to work in kolkhoz and sovkhoz farms. Those who resisted the new system were dealt with harshly. The Bakhsan uprising of 1928 was a direct consequence of the cruel measures of implementation. Many people were accused of being kulaks (well-to-do peasants exploiting other people's toil) and were either executed or exiled. Women were expected to shoulder the effort of building the new utopia but without being given commensurate political power. The Soviet system was strictly a patriarchal affair.

Industrialization and concomitant growth of the cities attracted a part of the rural population, which had to adapt to a new way of life. Mixed marriages were not common, the pattern being for Circassian men to marry Russian women. It was very rare for Circassian women to marry Russians on both religious and traditional grounds, for they were expected to be, and actually acted as bastions of ethnic customs and traditions. Some ambitious Circassian men opted for Russian spouses to improve their chances of promotion. This is a typical pattern of intermarriage between two groups in which one feels, or is made to feel, inferior by the other dominant one.

Of the 1,250 marriages recorded in Kabardino-Balkaria in 1999, less

than 40 involved members of different clans (Zarina Kanukova [Qaniqwe], 2000). The Kabardian elite lords it over the Balkars, who, in turn, consider themselves socially superior to the Cossacks.

The new ideology was inimical to Circassian traditions. Some customs were vehemently attacked as throwbacks to the dark ages of feudalism. Russian researchers picked some aspects of social life and denigrated them as reactionary. Avoidance customs were particularly targeted, and papers were published denouncing them. Despite the offensive to erode their traditions, and the many evils introduced by the Communist system, like alcoholism and crime, the Circassians managed to preserve many aspects of their traditional way of life, especially in the countryside.

One of the curious results of the October Revolution was that many Circassian family names were registered as a result of renaming. According to J. Kokov, there were 2,000 Kabardian family names in the three Circassian republics. Some families boast of a few thousand members. In addition, a new pattern of familial attachment emerged in which all bearers of the same surname considered themselves as one clan, even if they were not blood-relatives. Strict exogamy was observed no matter how distant the relationship. In the relative freedom of Glasnost years, large families began to organize themselves to foster co-operation.

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## ТЕДЗАПІЭМ И ЛЪЭНЫКЪУЭМКІЭ

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### ОНЛАЙН ТХЫЛЪЫЦІЭХЭР

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[Circassian Customs and Traditions]

ДУНЕЙПСО АДЫГЭ КЪЭХУТЭНЫГЪЭ ЦЕНТР, 2009. ТХЫЛЪ  
ЗЫГЪЭХЪЗЫРАР ЖЭМЫХЪУЭ АМДЖЭДЦ (АМЫЩЦ).

[By Amjad M. Jaimoukha; International Centre for Circassian Studies,  
2009]

Мы тхылъыр къахуэщхъэпэну адыгэбзэмкІэрэ инджылызыбзэмкІэрэ  
зеджэф псоми. Тхылъ псом пщІэншэу онлайн уеджэ хъунуш.  
<<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-etiquette.php>>

This book provides an introductory account of Circassian customs and traditions. A number of books on this topic were published in Circassian and Russian in the Northwest Caucasus. The online library of the International Centre for Circassian Studies boasts of two such works. There is a need to translate these seminal works to world languages to make the traditional lore of the Circassians more accessible to world readership. The book is available online and can be downloaded for free. [Online. Available HTTP: <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-etiquette.php>> (accessed 30 May 2009)]



Folklorists and culturalists can obtain interesting materials from the book for research. Teachers of Circassian will find this book useful, as it combines two languages. It is suggested that this book be made part of Circassian language teaching curriculums in both Circassia and the diaspora.

## ОНЛАЙН АДЫГЭ ТХЫЛЪХЭРИ ГАЗЕТХЭРИ

### ОНЛАЙН АДЫГЭ ТХЫЛЪХЭР

[Online Circassian Books]

The following books have been made available by the International Centre for Circassian Studies:

Belaghi, Luba, *ГЪЭУНЭХУИЭ. Ghewnexwp'e* [Trials and Tribulations], Nalchik: M. and V. Kotlyarov Book Press, 2008. [Made available courtesy of the author]

This is a collection of Belaghi's poems portraying her outlook on her native language and culture and the homeland. Readers of Circassian would certainly appreciate the linguistic mastery and vivid imagery. Belaghi is one of the trusted guardians of Circassian language and literature.

<<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-literature.php>>

Maf'edz (Mafedzev), S. (Kh.), *АДЫГЭ ХАБЗЭ. Adige Xabze* [Circassian Customs and Traditions], Nalchik: El'-Fa, 1994. [In Kabardian]

This is verily a masterpiece of Circassian language and culture. It is indispensable for deep understanding and appreciation of Circassian customs and traditions.

<<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-etiquette.php>>

Sherjes (Шэрджэс), A. and Heqwn (Хьэжъун), M., *АДЫГЭХЭМРЭ АХЭМ Я ХАБЗЭХЭМРЭ. Adigexemre Axem ya Xabzexemre* [The Circassians and Their Customs and Traditions], Maikop: RIPO, 2000.

This is a seminal and detailed book on the Circassians and their customs and traditions. It contains many maps, pictures, and illustrations. It is a must read for all those interested in the intricate details of one of the most elaborate world etiquettes. 352 pages.

<<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-etiquette.php>>

Qermoqwe (Къэрмокъуэ), Н., *НАРТХЭР: ПАСЭРЕЙ ЛЫХЪУЖЪХЭМ Я ХЪЫБАР. Nartxer: Paserey L'ix'wzchxem ya X'ibarxer* [The Narts: Tales of the Heroes of Yore], Nalchik: Elbrus Book Press, 2001. [Щалэгъуалэм пащцэ зытхыжар: Къэрмокъуэ Хъэмидц]

This is a very fine book that all readers of Circassian should include in their libraries. There are useful notes and explanations that broaden the perspective offered by the (mere) tales.

<<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-library.php>>

Heqwn (Хъэкъун), В. Ю., *АДЫГЭ КЪЭКЫГЪЭЦІЭХЭР. Adige qech'ighets'exer* [Dictionary of Circassian Flora], Nalchik: Elbrus Book Press, 1992 (second edition). [About 1,500 entries]

<<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-library.php>>

### **Books in other languages:**

Astvatsaturyan, È. G., *Oruzhie narodov Kavkaza* [Weapons of the Peoples of the Caucasus], St Petersburg: Atlant, 2004. Online. Available [HTTP: <http://www.nartalbum.com/picture/upload/file/CaucasiaWeapon.pdf>](http://www.nartalbum.com/picture/upload/file/CaucasiaWeapon.pdf) (accessed 12 May 2009). [This is a valuable work that lists Caucasian weapon artisans, including Circassian masters. It also has an account on historical Circassia and beautiful illustrations]

Beytuganov (Beitighwen), S. N., *Kabarda: Istoriya i familii* [Kabarda: History and Families], Nalchik: Elbrus Book Press, 2007. Online. Available [HTTP: <http://www.smikbr.ru/2007/elbrus/rus/beituganov%20s-1.pdf>](http://www.smikbr.ru/2007/elbrus/rus/beituganov%20s-1.pdf) (accessed 12 May 2009).

**ОНЛАЙН АДЫГЭ ГАЗЕТХЭР**  
[Online Circassian Newspapers]

**АДЫГЭ МАКЪ (Adige Maq)**  
[Circassian Voice Newspaper]  
<<http://www.adygvoice.ru/>>

«Тызэкъотмэ тыльэш» ('Tizeqwetme tilhesh')  
['There is strength in union']

Адыгэ Республикэм и Къэралыгъо Совет-Хасэм ыкӀи  
иправительствэ ягъэзет.

The Newspaper of the Republic of Adigea State Council (Xase) and  
Government.

The republican newspaper *Adige Maq* is published five times a week in  
both Circassian and Russian ('Голос Адыга'). About 3,600 copies of  
each edition are published. This is the only systematic cyber publication  
in the Circassian language in the Republic of Adigea. It deals with  
political and cultural issues and sports. On 8 March 2008 the Newspaper  
celebrated its 85th anniversary.

**АДЫГЭ ПСАЛЪЭ (Adige Psalhe)**  
[Circassian Word Newspaper]  
<<http://www.adyghepsale.ru/>>

***ФИФИ ФЫМЫГЪЭПУД, ФИ ИЕЙ ФЫМЫГЪЭПЩКИУ.  
Don't belittle your good qualities, and don't hide your bad ones.***

Къэбэрдей-Балъкъэрым и Парламентымрэ Правительствэмрэ я  
газет.

Organ of the Parliament and Government of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic.

Circassian language newspaper that is published five times a week. It started publication in 1924. It is also available (in pdf format) at [Mass Information Media Portal](http://ap.smikbr.ru/index1.php). <<http://ap.smikbr.ru/index1.php>>

## **АДЫГЭ ЛИТЕРАТУРНЭ ЖУРНАЛХЭР**

[Circassian Literary Journals]

### **ІУАЦХЪЭМАХУЭ**

Адыгэ тхакІуэхэм я журнал. Минрэ щийбгъурэ тхущІрэ ирэ гъэм лъандэрэ кыдокІ, мазитІ къэсу зэ. Къэбэрдей-Балъкъэр Республикэм и Адыгэ ТхакІуэхэм я Союзым кыдегъэкІ. Журнал щІагъуэм и ужьрей выпускхэм онлайн уеджэ хъунуш. [[http://jurnals.smikbr.ru/downloads.php?cat\\_id=3](http://jurnals.smikbr.ru/downloads.php?cat_id=3)]

### **'Waschhemaxwe [Mount Elbrus]**

This is the most prestigious and influential literary journal in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, published (until 1991) by the Union of the Writers of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR. The first issue of the monthly came out in 1958. The Journal also deals with historical and artistic matters. Since 1991, it has been published by the Union of the Circassian Writers of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic once every two months. Less than 3,000 copies of each edition of the Journal are published. The Journal is available for downloading (in pdf format). Online. Available HTTP: <[http://jurnals.smikbr.ru/downloads.php?cat\\_id=3](http://jurnals.smikbr.ru/downloads.php?cat_id=3)>.

### **Zeqweshnigh [Friendship]**

In Adigea, *Zeqweshnigh* (Зэкъошныгъ) and its Russian version *Druzhba* are the literary almanacs of the (modern and post-Soviet reincarnation of the) Adigean Branch of the Union of Soviet Writers, Adignatsizdat. They were first issued in Maikop in 1946. These Journals broach literary, artistic, political and social subject matters and issues. About a thousand copies of each edition of the quarterly *Zeqweshnigh* are published. Unfortunately, the Journal does not have a dedicated Internet portal and is not available online.

## Interesting Publications

### Books

Cheterian, V., *War and Peace in the Caucasus: Russia's Troubled Frontier*, Columbia University Press, 2009. [Having spent decades reporting on conflicts in Georgia and Chechnya, Vicken Cheterian provides an authoritative account of ethno-nationalistic strife in the Caucasus since the collapse of the Soviet Union. He investigates why some nationalist movements became violent while others did not and explores various secessionist rebellions in the region. He also discusses ongoing instability in the North Caucasus, Georgia, and Armenia, and analyzes the competition between Western powers and a newly resurgent Russia for the Caucasus's hydrocarbon resources. Available for preview at [Google Books](#)]

Gammer, M. (ed.), *Ethno-Nationalism, Islam and the State in the Caucasus: Post-Soviet Disorder*, Central Asian Studies Series 9, London and New York: Routledge, 2008. [Available for preview on [Google Books](#)]

Klimenko, O., Bowers, S. R., and Solovyeva, L., *North Caucasus Baseline Project: Adygea*, Faculty Publications and Presentations, Center for Security and Science, Helms School of Government, Liberty University, 2009. Online. Available HTTP: [http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=gov\\_fac\\_pubs](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=gov_fac_pubs) (accessed 29 April 2009). [This report is one good reason for the Circassians to become more aware of their situation and to respond to points of view that are inimical to their well-being and that compromise their future prospects]

McGregor, A., *A Military History of Modern Egypt: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Ramadan War*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger Security International, 2006.

This book should prove of particular use to researchers and readers interested in the fate of the Circassian Mamluks in Egypt following the destruction of their sultanate in 1517 at the hands of the Ottomans. It is shown that the Circassians maintained their sway in Egypt for centuries during the Ottoman suzerainty over Egypt...

[Egypt has one of the oldest civilizations and proudest national histories in the world, but most military histories treat it as a mere battleground for other great imperial powers such as the Ottoman Empire, the French, and the British. In a lively and stirring narrative, this work tells the untold story of the Egyptian experience. It looks at the lives of Egyptian soldiers fighting at home and abroad, and shows the roles those soldiers and their leaders have played in Middle-Eastern and world history for 500 years – especially in the convulsions that have transformed the Muslim world during the past two centuries. Beginning with an overview of Egypt’s ancient and medieval heritage, the book then explores Ottoman military rule, explaining how a tiny Turkish-speaking minority maintained absolute power by keeping military knowledge out of the grasp of native Egyptians. Readers will see how Napoleon’s failed Egyptian campaign of 1798 introduced the nation to Europe but, more important, brought modern Western influences to Egypt. During the 19th century, new arms and tactics and the rising force of nationalism transformed Egypt as the empire of the Ottoman Turks slowly decayed. Independence was thwarted by the British, who took over the country in the 1880s to secure links to India. Yet the British paved the way for independence, retraining and strengthening the Egyptian military to make it the strongest and most nationalist force in the country. Finally, McGregor’s closing chapters look at Arab nationalism, and at the Egyptian army in the wars of the late 20th century. Available for preview on Google Books]

Dr. Andrew McGregor is Director of Aberfoyle International Security in Toronto and editor of Global Terrorism Analysis Publications at the Jamestown Foundation in Washington DC. He has published many articles on historical and security issues, including a number of works on Circassian (and North Caucasian) matters.



## Papers & Articles

Merza, E., 'In Search of a Lost Time: (Re-)Construction of Identity in the Circassian Diaspora in Israel', in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem*, 19, année 2008. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://bcrfj.revues.org/document5911.html>> (accessed 24 May 2009). [Translated from French. Abstract: Circassians in Israel – whose population is estimated at 4,000 people – are divided between the two villages of Kfar Kama (Lower Galilee, district of Tiberias) and Rihanya (Lebanese border, district of Safed). This population is a unique example of a non-Arab (but Caucasian) Muslim group which claims an active Israeli citizenship and who, contrary to such a situation might imply, retains traditional cultural elements very meaningful while enjoying an indisputable civic integration. Israelis but not Jews, Muslims but not Arabs, how Circassians of Israel could find their right place facing the two identity entities competing, without leaving much space vacant, the legitimacy of a presence and whose stories, disasters and pains confront and compete rather than admit and understand each other?...]

Merza, E., 'À la recherche d'un temps perdu: La (re)construction identitaire de la diaspora tcherkesse d'Israël', in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem*, 19, année 2008. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://bcrfj.revues.org/document5908.html>> (accessed 24 May 2009). [Résumé: Les Tcherkesses d'Israël – dont la population est estimée à 4 000 personnes – sont répartis entre les deux villages de Kfar Kama et de Rihanya. Le cas de cette population d'Israël représente un exemple unique de population musulmane non-arabe (mais caucasienne), qui revendique une citoyenneté israélienne active et qui, contrairement à ce qu'une telle conjoncture pourrait laisser supposer, conserve divers éléments culturels traditionnels très prégnants tout en bénéficiant d'une intégration citoyenne indiscutable. Israéliens mais pas juifs, musulmans mais pas arabes, comment les Tcherkesses d'Israël pourraient-ils trouver leur place face aux

deux entités identitaires qui se disputent, sans laisser beaucoup d'espace vacant, la légitimité d'une présence et dont les histoires, les catastrophes et les douleurs se confrontent ?...]

Miyazawa, E., 'The Narrative of Nobles, the Silence of Slaves: Social Memories of a Bridewealth Problem among Circassians in Central Anatolia', in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 76, 2008, pp 21-49. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://repository.tufs.ac.jp/bitstream/10108/50659/1/jaas076002.pdf>> (accessed 11 June 2009). [In Japanese. **Abstract:** The effects of slavery are still felt in aspects of social life in some Middle Eastern countries in which slavery was legally maintained till relatively recently. However, there is a dearth of academic studies of slavery in these societies, and studies that look at the problem from an anthropological perspective are almost non-existent. Among Circassians in Uzunyayla plateau of Central Anatolia—a major source of female slaves in Ottoman Istanbul—the silence of slave descendants about history is observable, whereas people from former noble families are highly articulate in recounting a specific version of history. This article examines the ways in which the silence and the dominant version of history are formed in relation to each other. With this aim in mind, it looks at the bridewealth problem that made marriage difficult among local Circassians in the 1960s, and analyses oral accounts of meetings that was held with the aim of reducing rates of bridewealth payment, in terms of their historic status and current economic conditions. This research shows that slave descendants, divided by unequal distribution of wealth, produce widely differing versions of the story, while former nobles, though equally heterogeneous in wealth, have a shared historical narrative. Nonetheless, slave descendants have certainly some stories to tell, though as a reaction against the former nobles' elite history, which ought to be regarded positively as part of the everyday practice of the socially weak, i.e. as strategic acts aimed at making out tactfully in difficult conditions. The article is based on the writer's participatory observation research in Uzunyayla for extended periods (September 1997-April 1999, June-July 2004)]

- ‘New Roots for the Uprooted: The Ambiguous Experience of the Circassian Diaspora in Rural Turkey’, in *The Contemporary Middle East*, vol. 47, July 2009a. [In Japanese]
- ‘Some Consequences of the Re-encounter with the ‘Homeland’ on the Production of Local Knowledge: A Case of Circassians in Turkey’, in *Circassianacademia Abkhazia Conference Proceedings*, Ankara: Kaf-Dav Yayınları, 2009b. [In English]
- ‘Transformation of Local Knowledge among Circassians in Turkey: Some Impacts of the Revived Contacts with “Homeland”’, in Ronald Grigor Suny & Hirotake Maeda (eds.), *Between Russia and the Middle East: Caucasia and its Peoples*, New York & London: Rutledge (the New Horizons of the Islamic Studies Series), 2009c. [In English. NOTE: The publisher of the book has not been finalised yet]

Paxson, M., ‘The Story of Memory in a Kabardian Village: Preparatory Field Research’, IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board) Research Report, 2007. Online. Available HTTP:

<<http://www.irex.org/programs/stg/research/07/Paxson.pdf>>

(accessed 3 June 2009). [‘Presently, regional policies exist which encourage children of all ethnic groups (in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic) to learn Kabardian in school. Because of this, a pedagogical system is developing for the study of Kabardian aimed at the education of school children. For adult learning, virtually no pedagogy has existed up to this point. Those who wish to learn the language must invent methods and techniques in consultation with linguists, philologists, and teachers...’]

- ‘They Call It Home: Ethnic and Religious Violence Keep Russia’s North Caucasus Region in the News’, in *The Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 2, spring 2009. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.circassianworld.com/new/general/1352-they-call-it-home-by-mpaxson.html>> (accessed 18 May 2009). [A portrait of daily life in one small village reveals a richer, more hopeful reality. Margaret Paxson is senior associate at the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Kennan Institute and a visiting scholar at the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs]

Rannut, Ü., 'Circassian Language Maintenance in Jordan', in *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, vol. 30, 18 March 2009. [Abstract: The central goal of this research is to explore the language policy aspects in Jordan by focusing on the Circassian language maintenance issues and to provide measures for language revitalisation in the current demographic, linguistic and political situation. Research is based on multiple sources of information, but primarily on the empirical data collected through 14 videotaped interviews conducted with prominent researchers and professors and teachers of Circassian, through observations and a survey covering 485 respondents, including 323 pupils from the age of 10 up to 16, and 162 parents. The Circassian language status and maintenance are analysed as a continuum of language functions and domains in a society. Classification is based on the traditional distribution of language policy dimensions, where language status, corpus and acquisition aspects, as well as UNESCO's nine language vitality factors and linguistic rights are considered. Different factors influencing language maintenance are useful for characterising a language's overall sociolinguistic situation. So far there has been neither expert evaluation of the Circassian language situation based on international legal documents, nor has there been research which would provide basis for requesting governmental support and plan further steps for language revitalisation.]

Shwartz, O., 'Restoration and Reconstruction of the Circassian Village Kfar-Kama', article presented at TS 7A – Settlements Facing Man Made Changes, FIG Working Week 2009, Surveyors Key Role in Accelerated Development, Eilat, Israel, 3-8 May 2009. Online. Available HTTP: <[http://www.fig.net/pub/fig2009/papers/ts07a/ts07a\\_shwartz\\_33\\_16.pdf](http://www.fig.net/pub/fig2009/papers/ts07a/ts07a_shwartz_33_16.pdf)> (accessed 11 June 2009). [**Summary**: The article focuses on the various perceptions and social constructions of the village core articulated by the planners and the residents. The residents who created their perception and images of the place they live in, in a more intuitive way, from their daily routine practices in the village and the planners, who used their

professional knowledge, which they obtained from formal education. The article examines planning activities that guided the restoration and preservation of the core of the village, Kfar Kama, and discuss the way in which these activities impacted social processes in the village. This paper follows external processes that compete with the architectural preservation of the "authentic" village core and examines the inner conflict of the Circassian people, between the desire to preserve their tradition, which includes rigid social codes, and life in the reality of the open and permissive Israeli society.]

## **Documentaries**

### **Eat with both hands!**

#### **New documentary on Jordanian cuisine**

Lara Darwazah, a Jordanian media worker and music teacher based in the United Arab Emirates, has just produced an English-language documentary on Jordanian cuisine entitled 'Eat with both hands!'. The 25-minute long film features Eastern Jordanian (mainly *mansaf*), Palestinian (*Msakhan*), and Circassian dishes and beverages. The eye-opening documentary is beautifully shot and skillfully narrated. It is thought to be the first work of its kind, dealing as it does with the salient characteristics of the cuisines of the principal cultural groups in Jordan. The 'Circassian section' of the film features the dishes prepared by the Circassian Kitchen run by the Circassian Charity Association (CCA) in Jordan, which is currently expanding and upgrading its operations from its new headquarters at the CCA complex in Amman. The International Centre for Circassian Studies provided information on Circassian cuisine and its intimate connection with Circassian culture and folklore.

## ПСАЛЪЭ ЩАГЪУЭХЭР

### Significant words in this issue

Мы едзыгъуэм ит псалъэ щагъуэхэм мыхъэнэ кыкIхэр Жэмыхъуэ Амджэд и «КЪЭБЭРДЕЙ-ИНДЖЫЛЫЗ (АНГЛИЙСКЭ) ПСАЛЪАЛЪЭМ» (Амман квалэ: Сэнджэлей тхыль тедзапIэ, 1997; етIуанэрей тедзэгъуэ: 2010) кыдэтхаш.

[The following words are from A. M. Jaimoukha (Zhemix'we), *Kabardian-English Dictionary: Being a Literary Lexicon of East Circassian*, Amman: Sanjalay Press, 1997; second edition: 2010]

**анэбзэ** mother tongue, native language; vernacular.

**бампIэ I** 1. melancholy, sadness, depression; 2. suffering; II *attr.* sad, melancholy, melancholic; \* *бампIэр кытеуэн: to be sad/melancholy/depressed; to have the blues, to have a fit of spleen; бампIэм ихъын: 1. to be sad/melancholy; 2. to be filled with indignation, to be indignant.*

**бэджэнд** lease; hire; *зыгуэр бэджэнду кэщтэн: on lease, to rent smth., to hire smth.*

**бзэ** 1. language, tongue; speech, 2. *attr.* linguistic; language; vocal; speech; \* *бзэр убыдын: to hold one's tongue; бзэр ничын: to lapse into silence; to hold one's tongue; ~ дыкъяукъуэ: gossip, tale-teller, tale-bearer; ~ дьидж, ~ бзаджэ: wicked/ malicious tongue; ~ хуэкъутэн (хуэкъута хъун): to learn to speak a foreign language well; бзэр къэмIэтэн: to talk obscenely; to loosen one's tongue; бзэр цубыдын: 1. to be deprived of speech; 2. fig. to lose one's tongue; to be deprived of the gift of speech; ~ IэфI: tender, sweet; good with words, sliver-tongued.*

**бзэщIэныгъэ** 1. linguistics; science of language; 2. *attr.* linguistic.

**бырыб** *adj.* fluffed up (of hair).

**вагъуэ** star (heavenly body); \* *и вагъуэр ижащ: his star has faded (he is exhausted); things are not going well for him.*

**губзыгъагъэ** cleverness, brightness, quick-wittedness, sharpness, keenness of wit.

**гурыхуэ** *adj.* gifted, clever; possessing a good/retentive memory.

**гүшэ** 1. cradle; 2. *attr.* cradle; ~ уэрэд: *lullaby, cradle song.*

**гъашIэ** life; ~ насыныфIэ: *happy existence/life;* \* гъащIэр гъэкIуэн (хьын): *to spend one's life;* гъащIэр ухын: *to pass away, decease, die;* гъащIэм хыхьэн: *to become part of one's life, to enter one's life;* Iуэхугуэр гъащIэм щыпхыгъэкIын: *to put the proposal into effect;* гъащIэр кIэщIу: *life is but a span;* гъащIэмрэ ажалымрэ я зэхуакум: *a matter of life and death.*

**гъэщIэгъуэн** 1. charm, fascination; wonder, marvel; 2. *as adj.* charming, fascinating; wonderful; delightful, exquisite.

**гъыбзэ** *folk.* ritual lamentation/weeping/crying; lament (song), song of lamentation, elegy.

**гъуээджэ** *adj.* excellent, magnificent, splended, exquisite.

**дадэ** grandad, grand-dad; grandpa(па) (form of address).

**дышэ** gold.

**джэгу** 1. game; pastime; 2. dance get-together/gathering.

**джэгуакIуэ** 1. minstrel, vocalist, singer; 2. joker, jester; 3. organizer of group activities.

**егъэля** *adj.* excessive.

**егъэляуэ** *adv.* excessively.

**ещхьыркъабзэу** 1. *adv.* also; as well, too; equally, as well as, likewise; at the same time; 2. (*conjunction*) also; as well, too.

**жыгей** 1. oak; Quercus; 2. *attr.* oak; ~ смIол: *oak table;* ~ мээ: *oak-forest.*

**жьэгугу** hearth; \* ~ науцхьэ: *family hearth;* ~ науцхьэ нэщI: *empty hearth;* ~ дэсыжын: *to stay at home, to become a stay-at-home;* ~ науцхьэм дэсын: 1. *to stay at home;* 2. *to be on a visit (to smb.); to idle, loaf;* ~ дэтIысхьэжын: *to become a permanent stay-at-home due to old age.*

**жьэгупатхьэ** patron of the domestic hearth in the Circassian Pantheon. He shared this godhood with Sozeresh.

**жьэгупащхьэ** 1. place by the hearth; 2. living room; 3. *fig.* family hearth.

**зауэ-банэ** 1. battle; 2. struggle, fight; 3. scuffle; \* зауи бани хэмыту: *without striking a blow.*

**зээмызэ** *adv.* sometimes, at times, (every) now and then, occasionally.

**зэхэлыкIэ** 1. structure; system; 2. structure, design; машинэм и ~: *structure of the machine.*

**зэхьуэкIыныгъэ** change.



**зыужыжын** *vi* to develop, progress, improve.

**зышыIэн** *vi* **1.** to abstain, refrain (from smth.); **2.** to be patient.

**иджырей** *adj.* present, present-day, (of) today, contemporary; ~ *гъауцIэ*: *the present.*

**кIыщ** smithy, forge; farriery; \* ~ *уэцыншэ*: (*saying*) *the shoemaker's wife is the worst shod.*

**къалэн** **1.** task, object, aim; *къалэн нэхъыцхъэр*: *the main task*; **2.** commitment, pledge; *къалэн къэцтэн*: *to pledge/commit oneself.*

**къэгъэсэбэнын** *vt* to use, utilize (smth.); to make use (of smth.); *оныт пашэр къэгъэсэбэнын*: *to utilize progressive methods/innovations.*

**къэпхуэтэжын** *vt* to grab, catch, grasp (smb., smth.) again.

**къэтIын** *vt* to dig; to dig up/out; *кумб ~*: *to dig a hole*; *кIэнауэ ~*: *to dig up a ditch*; *кIэртIофыр ~*: *to dig/lift potatoes.*

**къуапэ** corner (spherical, polyhedral); *ихъэнт ~*: *corner of pillow*; *стIол ~*: *corner of table*; \* *уанэ ~*: *pommel (upward projecting front part of saddle).*

**къудамэ** branch, bough.

**къулыкъу** **1.** service (military and civil); **2.** work; **3.** post; appointment; position.

**лъапсэ** **1.** native land, homeland, ancestral lands; **2.** patrimony, (patrimonial estate); **3.** kinsfolk, kin, relatives (with their houses and farmsteads); \* *лъапсэр гъэгъуцIэн (гъэгъун)*: *to destroy utterly*; *лъапсэм иплъэн*: *to destroy (smb.'s) property, to bring to grief.*

**лъэдакъэ** **1.** heel; **2.** thick end of log; **3.** stub, stump; butt-end; \* *и лъэдакъэр и пхэцIыцхъэм теуэу мажэ*: *he is running at breakneck speed, or like mad*; *лъэдакъэм теувэн*: *to tread on (smb.'s) heels, to overtake*; *лъэдакъэм егъэпхуэтэжын*: *to give it hot (to smb.)*; ~ *махуэ къыцынэн*: *to leave happiness in one's native home (of married woman).*

**лъэпкъ** **1.** people, nation; ~ *куэд хъу*: *multinational*; **2.** birth, origin, stock; **3.** race, breed, species (of livestock); **4.** variety, kind; *гуэдзыфI ~*: *good variety of wheat.*

**лъэIу** request, petition, application.

**лъэIуэн** *vi* to ask, beg (smb. for smth.).

**лъыпс** blood; *уIэгъэ лъыпсыр къыреутхыкI*: *blood is flowing out of the wound*; \* *лъыпсыр гъэжэн*: *to shed blood (for).*

**лъыхъуэн** *vt* to look for, search for, seek after.

**ллын** maturity; coming of age (of male); ~ *увэн*: to reach maturity, to come of age (of male).

**мазэ** moon.

**мазэщ** new moon.

**мамыр** I 1. peace; calm; quiet; 2. silence, quiet; II *attr.* 1. peaceful; peaceable; placid; 2. quiet; silent; still.

**мащэ** pit; hole; hollow.

**мэгъу** magic, sorcery.

**накьыгъэ** time of flowering/blossoming.

**налуэ** *adj.* 1. obvious, clear, apparent, distinct; 2. well-known, distinguished.

**нэпс** tear; tears; *нэпсыр зыщлэм железа*: lachrymal gland; \* ~ *гуащлэ*: bitter tears; *нэпсыр псыхэлыгъуэу егъажэ*: (he) is shedding flood of tears; ~ *щлэгъэклын (щлэгъэтклын)*: to shed tears; to turn on the waterworks; *нэпсыр къоклуэ*: tears are welling up; ~ *щлэнлымлыкын*: to squeeze out a tear; ~ *умлынцын*: to let tears flow; *и нэпсылэ щлеутхыл*: (his) tears are flowing.

**нэхульэ** time preceding dawn; ~ *къызэклэщлутхын (къызэклэщлучын)*: to dawn, break.

**нэхьыбэ** *adj.* bigger, greater, larger; \* ~ *дыдэми*: at most.

**нысашэ** 1. wedding; ~ *щлын*: to celebrate one's wedding; 2. *attr.* wedding; ~ *тыгъэхэр*: wedding presents.

**нысащлэ** bride.

**нысэ** daughter-in-law.

**пасрей** *adj.* antique, age-old, ancient.

**пэтлинэ** (пэтлей) *adj.* snub-nosed.

**псэжь** *adj.* I impudent, impertinent, insolent, barefaced; II 1. impudent/impertinent/insolent person; 2. prostitute, street-walker; \* *псэжьым къылъхуа*: (abusive) son of a bitch; offspring of a slut; bastard.

**псей** *bot.* 1. fir(-tree); spruce; ~ *къащхуэ*: blue fir; 2. *attr.* fir; ~ *мэз*: fir-wood, fir forest.

**псысэ** 1. tale, story; ~ *күэд зылыатэ*: tale-teller, story-teller; 2. *attr.* fairy-tale.

**псыхын** *vt* 1. to temper, harden (metals); 2. *fig.* to temper, harden (smb., smth.; ex.: an organism).

**пуд** *adj.* cheap; inexpensive; *хэпшып* ~: cheap article.

**пхъашэ** *adj.* **1.** fragile, frail; brittle; **2.** hard, tough; stiff; coarse, rough; **3.** *fig.* ardent, fervent, fervid, zealous, spirited.

**пхъэлантхъуэ** **1.** pole with a great number of twigs for hanging up articles, utensils (in courtyard, field-camp, etc.); **2.** this pole (hawthorn or pear sappling with seven branches) as an icon and ritualistic representation of Sozeresh, the god of fertility, family hearth, well-being and illness in the Circassian Pantheon; **3.** loose filaments.

**пшыналъэ** **1.** song; air; **2.** muse.

**пшыныжын** *vt* **1.** to pay off, clear off, a debt; **2.** to recompense, compensate.

**пцэдджыжь** **1.** morning; *пцэдджыжьым:* in the morning; *пцэдджыжьым жыуэ:* early in the morning; *пцэдджыжькIэ:* in the morning(s); **2.** *attr.* morning; **3.** *as adv.* tomorrow morning; in the morning; \* ~ *нэмзым:* at daybreak, at first light; *yu ~ фIыуэ!:* good morning!

**пцIантIэ** **1.** court, yard, courtyard; **2.** *attr.* of 1; ~ *псэуальэхэр:* outbuildings, outhouses.

**синоним** *ling.* синоним.

**тхакIуэ** writer, author; *тхакIуэхэм я съезд:* writers' conference/convention.

**тхыдэ** history; *адыгэ литературэм и ~:* history of Circassian literature.

**тхыль** а) **1.** book; ~ *еджэн:* to read a book; **2.** document; б) *attr.* book; ~ *медзанIэ:* book publishing house.

**тхьэлъэIу** religious festival, festive meal as offering to deity (for the purpose of begging/soliciting for rain, recovery of the sick, etc.).

**тхьэмадэ** **1.** father-in-law (husband's father); **2.** toast-master.

**уэрэд** song; air.

**уэрэдус** song-writer, author of songs.

**уэрэджыIакIуэ** singer.

**уэсят** (Arabic) **1.** testament, will; last will; **2.** precept; behest.

**уэфI** *adj.* **1.** serene, fine, good; *махуэ ~:* fine day; **2.** good/fine weather; ~ *хьуаиц:* fine weather has set in.

**убзэ** **1.** servile attention, exaggerated courtesy, **2.** compliment, courtesy, court.

**угьурлы** *adj.* kind, good; *цIыху ~:* kind/good person.

**узыншэ** *adj.* sound, healthy; *сабий ~:* healthy child; *менлъэ ~:* sound appearance, healthy look; ~ *хьужын:* to get better, to recover, to

*convalesce*; ~ *хъун*: *to become healthy/sturdy, to become strong/stronger.*

**унафэ** **1.** order, command, injunction; ~ *хуэццЫн*: *to give an order, to order/command*; **2.** decision; judgement; decree; resolution; instruction; direction; ~ *ццЫн*: *to decide/resolve, to pass a resolution, to deliver a judgment.*

**утыку** ground; area; square (where games are played, performances take place dances held, etc.); \* ~ *Иуэху ццЫн*: *to make public/known, to divulge.*

**фэепль** memory (recollection, reminiscence of smb., smth.); *фэепльу тмын*: *to give (smth.) for memory/as a souvenir/as a keepsake.*

**фыгыуэ** I. **1.** envy; **2.** envious person; II *attr.* envious.

**фцэхъус** greeting with which a host addresses his guests.

**фцыгыуэ** riches, wealth, fortune; property.

**хабзэ** **1.** usage; law; customary law; custom, tradition; *ар абы и хабзэцц*: *this is his custom*; **2.** decency, propriety; decorum; *адыгэ ~*: *Circassian etiquette.*

**хамэ** **1.** *adj.* strange, foreign, alien; **2.** stranger, outsider, foreigner, alien; *хамэр дыххэ хъунукъым*: *unauthorized persons not allowed in.*

**хасэ** *folk.* council, conference, deliberative meeting/ debate; *нарт ~*: *Nart Council (meeting of the Narts to deliberate a course of action in face of external threat, or to debate contentious problems)*; ~ *гъэшын*: *to hold a meeting.*

**хэгъэхъуэн** *vt* **1.** *c.f.* *хэхъуэн 1*; **2.** to increase, augment (smth.) (in quantity, number); **3.** to pour (smth.) in(to) smth. (into some liquid); **4.** to raise (smth.) (*ex.*: wages).

**хэзыгъэгъуазэ** introduction, introductory text; preface.

**хэку** I **1.** country; land; **2.** province, region, district; **3.** native land, fatherland, homeland, mother country; *хэку-анэ*: *mother-land, mother-country*; II *attr.* home (one's own country).

**хей** **1.** *adj.* not guilty, innocent, guiltless; **2.** innocent person; \* ~ *ццЫн*: *to declare innocent, honest.*

**хуэщцЫн** *vt* **1.** to build, construct (smth.) for smb., smth.; **2.** to make, manufacture (smth.) for smb., smth.; **3.** to manage, be able to build, construct (smth.); **4.** to manage, be able to make, manufacture (smth.).

**хьэгъуэлцыгыуэ** **1.** wedding, wedding celebrations/ festivities; **2.** *attr.* wedding; ~ *уэрэд*: *wedding song.*

**хьэрэшэ** buffalo milk.

**хъуэхъу** toast, wish; congratulation; \* *хъуэхъуи хъуэни хэмылбу*: *all right, well; happily.*

**шабий 1.** *bot.* Brachypodium pinnatum, **2.** soft hay-bedding in slippers.

**шэрыуэ** *adj.* skilful (of rifleman); *фочауэ ~*: *good shot/marksman*; \* *псалъэ шэрыуэхэр*: *pithy sayings.*

**шыкIэпшынэ** *mus.* Circassian violin (lit.: hotse-tail violin).

**щапхъэ 1.** measure; measurement; **2.** example; instance; *зыгуэрым ~ къытехын*: *to follow smb.'s example*; *~ гъэльэгъуэн*: *to set an example*; *щапхъэм нанцIэ*: *as an example.*

**щэн** disposition, temper, character; manner, outward bearing; manners.

**щэнхабзэ** culture; *адыгэ ~*: *Circassian culture.*

**щэху I 1.** secret; *щэхуу Iыгъын*: *to keep in secret*; *щэхур хэлуцIыIу цIын*: *to betray/reveal, or let out, the secret*; **2.** quiet, silence; calm, peace; **II attr.** **1.** secret; illegal, underground; *щэхуу Iэ Iэтыныгъэ*: *secret ballot*; *гугъэ ~*: *secret/lurking hope*; *лэжъыгъэ ~*; *underground work/activity*; **2.** low, faint, quiet; *макъ ~*: *low voice.*

**щхъэж** *adj.* each, every; \* *~ хуэфациэ и цауэгъууц*: *prov. birds of a feather flock together*; *~ и унэ бжэнлъакъуэц*: *(it is) time to go home*; *~ и унэ цылIыхъужыц*: *a cock is valiant on his own dunghill.*

**щхъэц** hair (on head); *~ Iэрамэ*: *lock(s), curl(s)*; *щхъэцыр ухуэнын*: *to plait/braid one's hair*; *~ зэгъужынIэ*: *parting (of hair).*

**щыщIэн vi 1.** to be hard-up, to be in need, to fall into need/want; **2.** to be missing/lacking/wanting (smth.), not to be sufficient (in smth.) (ex.: on inspection); **3.** to miss (smb.).

**щIагъуэ I adj. 1.** important, significant; **2.** rare, interesting; **II** (as noun) importance, significance.

**щIэблэ** generation; *ди ~*: *our generation*; *щIэблэжь*: *the older generation*; *щIэблэцIэ*: *the younger generation*; *зы щIэблэм къыкIрэ адрейм кIуэуэ*: *from generation to generation.*

**щIэупскIэн vt** to swing, rock, shake (smb., smth.); *гуцэр ~*: *to rock the cradle.*

**щIопщ** lash.

**щIылгъэ 1.** the (terrestrial) globe, the Earth; **2. attr.** earthly, terrestrial.

**щIыхуфэ** *adj.* bluish.

**щIыхь** honour, respect, esteem, regard; *~ хуэцIын*: *to show respect/esteem (for smb.).*

**эстетическэ** *adj.* aesthetic; *~ IуэхуеплъыкIэхэр*: *aesthetic views/opinions.*

**Гэмал** (амал) 1. method; way, mode; means; *хъумэныгъэм и ~*: means of defence; 2. opportunity, chance; *зыгуэр ицIэнкIэ ~ етын*: to give the opportunity/chance to do (smth.); ~ *зуIэ*: possible, feasible; ~ *зуIэ нсору сэ злэжъыниц*: I will do my utmost, or my (level) best; *абы нэсу ~ иIэц*: it is quite possible; \* ~ *имыIэу*: without fail; obligatory, compulsory, binding; \* ~ *нсору цIэн*: to know all the ins and outs, to be perfectly at home.

**ГэцIэжIын** *vi* 1. to tear oneself away from smb.'s hands; 2. to manage to tear oneself away, or escape.

**Гуэрыгуатэ** folklore, legend, tradition; national creative work transmitted orally.

**Гуфэ** 1. bank; shore; 2. *attr.* of 1; \* *Гуфэр къэжыхьын*: 1. to cringe (to/before smb.), to toady (to smb.); 2. to hang (around smb.); *Гуфэр къэжIухьын*: to beat about the bush.

**Гуцэцэн** *vi* to whisper.