

THE CIRCASSIANS - A FORGOTTEN GENOCIDE?

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Who are (or were) the Circassians?

This is the question I am usually asked if I ever mention my interest in the Circassians. Except for specialists in the Caucasus, there are few people in the Western world (although more people in the Middle East) who remember who the Circassians were, where they came from or what happened to them. They are an almost forgotten people. You will find no place called 'Circassia' on any contemporary map. The nearest you will get to it, and then only should you happen to know what the Russian word for 'Circassian' (borrowed from the Turkish) is *cherkess*, will be the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Province in southern Russia. This area in fact lies somewhat to the north of the historical Circassia: it is where some of the Circassians were resettled following the tsarist conquest of their homeland. Moreover, the name of the territory is now somewhat misleading, inasmuch as the Circassians, who theoretically share it with the Turkic Karachai people, actually account for a mere 10 percent of its roughly half-million population.^[1]

Perhaps, however, you like poring over old maps, as I do. If so, take a look at a map of Russia dating from the early-nineteenth century, and you will find Circassia clearly marked – a country in the north-western Caucasus and along the north-eastern shore of the Black Sea, stretching southwards from the banks of the River Kuban, which at that time marked the southern boundary of the Russian empire. And you can read about Circassia in the old books of nineteenth-century western travellers such as the French consul Gamba (1826), the English adventurer James Bell (1841), the French couple de Hell (1847), the American George Leighton Ditson (1850), and the Dutch consul de Marigny (1887). And if you go back in time a few more decades and inspect a map drawn in the middle of the eighteenth century, then you will see the name 'Circassia' boldly straddling both bank of the River Kuban, from the lowlands east of the Sea of Azov, between the Kuban, and the Don, all the way to the borders of Ossetia and Chechnya up in the main Caucasus mountain range and along the Black Sea coast from the isthmus of the Sea of Azov to Abkhazia.^[2] Circassia at that time, prior to tsarist imperial conquest, occupied an area of 55,663 square kilometres – rather greater than the area of Denmark – and possessed an indigenous population in excess of two million.^[3]

The origins of the Circassians can be traced back as far as the Bosphoran Kingdom of the eighth century BC, and possibly to the Cimmerian Empire that existed along the shores of the Azov Sea before 1500 BC. They enjoyed close cultural and trading ties with the ancient Greeks, especially with the Athenians, and even participated in the Olympic Games. Their gods also closely corresponded to the Greek gods: Shi-bla, God of Thunder, was their Zeus, Tlepsh, God of Iron and Fire, their Hephaestus.^[4] For most of their history they were an agricultural people. They had a feudal and patriarchal social structure consisting of princes,

nobles, freemen, and serfs. Most accounts describe them as having consisted of ‘tribes’, the exact number and designation of which seem to have varied over time. These tribes were too closely related to be considered separate ethnic or even sub-ethnic groups. Circassians’ identity was defined by a series of overlapping kinship groups, stretching outwards from the individual’s closest kin to the Circassian nation (or proto-nation if one prefers) as a whole.^[5]

Circassia was Christianized under Byzantine influence in the fifth and sixth centuries. While Daghestan in the north-eastern Caucasus was Islamized as early as the eighth century, Circassia long stayed outside the sphere of Arab and Muslim influence.^[6] From the sixteenth century it entered into alliance with Georgia: Georgians and Circassians regarded themselves as constituting a single Christian island in the Muslim sea and jointly appealed to Russia for protection. Tsar Ivan the Terrible had a Circassian wife. Muslim influence among the Circassians dates no earlier than the seventeenth century, and only in the eighteenth century, under the threat of impending Russian invasion, did they accept Islam, with a view to facilitating a defensive alliance with Ottoman Turkey and the Crimean Tatar Khanate.

The Circassians fought against Russian conquest for over a century, from 1763 to 1864 – longer than any other people of the Caucasus, even the Chechens. Their final defeat in the 1860s led to massacre and forced deportation, mainly across the Black Sea to Turkey, in the course of which a large proportion of them perished. Many Circassians were also utilized by the Ottomans in the Balkans to suppress the rebellious Serbs, but almost all of these were later relocated to the interior of Anatolia.

Since that time, the great majority – about 90 percent – of people of Circassian descent have lived in exile, mostly in Turkey, Jordan and elsewhere in the Middle East. Only isolated remnants, currently about three to four hundred thousand people altogether, remain in Russia and other parts of the post-Soviet region. During the last decades of the tsarist regime, the emptied and devastated Circassian lands were resettled by Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian and other colonists. Later many Georgians also settled in Abkhazia, feeding resentments that culminated in the recent Abkhaz-Georgian war - a conflict which can only be understood against the background of the Circassian trauma of the last century.

Massacre and Deportation

In 1860, having failed to subdue the Circassians in ninety-seven years of warfare, the Russian government decided to enforce their mass migration to other regions of the empire or to Turkey. General Yevdokimov was entrusted with the execution of this policy, and advanced into the still unconquered parts of Circassia with newly formed mobile columns of riflemen and Cossack cavalry. In the northern areas that he first penetrated, the Circassians submitted to his will: that same year, four thousand families set sail for Turkey from the estuary of the Kuban without offering any resistance.^[7] However, the tribes living further to the south-east did prepare to resist. At the place where now stands the popular Black Sea resort of Sochi, the Abadzekhs, Shapseghs and Ubykhs formed an assembly and appealed – in vain – to the Ottomans and Britain for help.

In September 1861, the Emperor himself, Tsar Alexander II, visited Yekaterinodar, the Russian town closest to the scene of the action, and there received a delegation of Circassian chiefs. The chiefs expressed readiness to recognize Russian suzerainty provided that Russian troops and Cossacks were removed from Circassian lands beyond the Rivers Kuban and Laba. Their proposal was rejected. The Abadzekhs, however, agreed to move to new lands offered them further north (many of the titular people of the Adygei Autonomous Province are their descendants) while the chiefs of the other tribes refused to uproot their people.

Subsequent military operations against them began in the spring of 1862.^[8] The Russian soldiers systematically burned the Circassian villages – all the villages of the Shapsegh without exception were burned down – while the crops growing in the fields were trampled under the hooves of the Cossacks' horses.^[9] Those inhabitants who then declared their submission to the Tsar were marched off, under the control of Russian superintendants, for resettlement on the plain to the north while those who refused to submit were sent down to the seashore to await deportation to Turkey. Many others – men, women and children – fled from their burning villages only to perish of hunger and exposure in the forest and mountains.

Having conquered the Shapsegh and Abadzekh, recounts the Circassian historian Shauket, the column of General Babich followed the seashore southwards, destroying villages as it went:

They were on the border of the land of the Ubykh. From the side of the Goitkh pass another column came to meet them. Little Ubykhia became the last citadel of Circassian freedom. The Ubykh made a last attempt to prolong the agony, but the Russians compressed the ring ever tighter. From the south, troops were landed in the very heart of the Ubykh land, while from the north three columns advanced through the mountains and along the seashore. The last resistance was broken.^[10]

Trakho, another Circassian historian, continues the story:

There remained only the small coastal tribes: the Pskhu, the Akhtsipsou, the Aibgo and the Jigit. In the course of May 1864 these tribes were annihilated almost to the last man, woman and child. Seeing this, Circassians gathered from all corners of the country in a frenzy of despair threw themselves into the valley of the Aibgo. For four days (7-11 May) the Russians were repulsed with great losses. Heavy artillery was then brought up and began to belch fire and smoke into the little valley. Not one of the defenders survived. The capture of this little valley, lost in the mountains, was the last act in the long tragedy of the Circassian people. On 21 May the Great Prince Mikhail Nikolaevich gathered his troops in a clearing for a thanksgiving service.^[11]

Of this same final battle-pogrom Shauket writes:

The last battle took place in the area of the Black Sea near Maikop, in the Khodz valley [i.e., the valley of the Aibgo] near the town of Akhchip. That rough mountainous area was the last stronghold at which women and children assembled for protection from the Russian advance. The women threw their jewellery into the river, took up arms and joined the men in order to fight the battle of death for the sake of their homeland and honour, lest they should fall captives in Russian hands. The two parties met in a horrible battle which turned out to be a massacre unprecedented in history. The objective of that battle [for the Circassians] was not to achieve success or victory, but to die honourably and to leave a life which had no honourable hope left. In that battle men and women were slaughtered mercilessly and blood flowed in rivers, so that it was said that “the bodies of the dead swam in a sea of blood”. Nevertheless, the Russians were not content with what they had done, but sought to satisfy their instincts by making the surviving children targets for their cannon shells.^[12]

The subsequent deportations to Turkey began on 28 May. They took place under horrendous conditions. The Russian historian Berzhe bore witness to the state of the Circassians even as they awaited deportation on the Black Sea shore:

I shall never forget the overwhelming impression made on me by the mountaineers in Novorossiisk [New-Russian] Bay, where about seventeen thousand of them were gathered on the shore. The late, inclement and cold time of year, the almost complete absence of means of subsistence and the epidemic of typhus and smallpox raging among them made their situation desperate. And indeed, whose heart would not be touched on seeing, for example, the already stiff corpse of a young Circassian woman lying in rags on the damp ground under the open sky with two infants, one struggling in his death-throes while the other sought to assuage his hunger at his dead mother's breast? And I saw not a few such scenes.^[13]

Those who had survived this ordeal thus far were now herded by the Russian soldiers en masse on to barges and small Turkish and Greek ships, loaded with several times as many passengers as they could carry. Many of these sank and their passengers drowned in the open sea. For those who survived the voyage, conditions on arrival in Turkey were no less horrific. Arrangements that had been made by the Turkish government for receiving and resettling the migrants were grossly inadequate. Moshnin, the Russian consul in Trabzon on the Turkish coast, reported as follows:

About six thousand Circassians were landed in Batum, [and] up to four thousand were sent to Çürüksu on the border [with Turkey]. They came with their emaciated and dying livestock. Average mortality seven people per day. About 240,000 deportees have arrived in Trabzon and its environs, of whom 19,000 have died... Average mortality two hundred people per day. Most of them are sent to Samsun; 63,290 remain. In Giresun there are about fifteen thousand people. In Samsun and its environs over 110,000 people. Mortality about two hundred people per day. Typhus is raging.^[14]

How many Circassians, then, perished from death in battle, by massacre, drowning, hunger, exposure and disease? Prior to the Russian conquest, the Circassians (including the Abkhaz) numbered about two million. By 1864, the north-western Caucasus had been emptied of its indigenous population almost in entirety. About 120-150,000 Circassians were resettled in places elsewhere in the Empire set aside by the Russian government. (By the time of the 1897 census, there were 217,000 Circassians in Russia). According to Brooks, about 500,000 were deported to Turkey;^[15] in addition, thirty thousand families - perhaps 200,000 people - had emigrated voluntarily in 1858, prior to the deportations. That still leaves well over one-half of the original population unaccounted for, to which must be added those who-died at sea or on arrival. The number who died in the Circassian catastrophe of the 1860s could hardly, therefore, have been fewer than one million, and may well have been closer to one-and-a-half million.^[16]

Was It Genocide?

Did the Russian conquest and deportation of the Circassians constitute the deliberate genocide of a people, or was it 'only' a case of ethnic cleansing carried out with brutal disregard to human suffering? My approach to this difficult question firstly involves examining the background of previous and concurrent Russian treatment of newly conquered peoples. Had the Russian empire already perpetrated, or was it perpetrating, genocide in other places, outside the Caucasus? Secondly, I consider the attitude of the nineteenth-century Russian political and military elite towards the Circassians. Had the possibility of genocide been contemplated as a solution to the problem posed by the Circassians' resistance to conquest? Or, to use the phrase made famous by Norman Cohn, was there 'a warrant for genocide'?^[17] And thirdly, why was the decision taken in favour of deportation? What was the thinking of the Tsar and his advisers that underlay this decision? Does it appear likely that their real purpose was genocide?

On this score it should suffice to consider two other important examples of Russia's relations with newly conquered peoples: the conquest of the native peoples of Siberia in the seventeenth century, and the incorporation of the Kazakh nomads in the nineteenth century.^[18] This latter process reached completion at about the same time as the conquest of Circassia (1864).

The indigenous peoples of Siberia lacked the numbers, political unity or military strength with which to block the steady Russian advance eastwards to the Pacific, but on occasion they did resist their economic exploitation. Thus, Russian brutality in collection of the pelt tax (yasak) sparked a rebellion among the Yakuts and the Tungusic-speaking tribes along the River Lena in 1642. The Russians responded with a reign of terror: native settlements were torched and hundreds of people were tortured and killed. The Yakut population alone is estimated to have fallen as a result by 70 percent between 1642 and 1682. However, it was the intention of the government in Moscow to exploit, not exterminate, the indigenes, and in order to resuscitate declining fur deliveries steps were taken towards the end of the century to protect them: for instance, no executions were to be carried out without Moscow's consent. Moscow again intervened after the most cruel episode of all, the 1697-9 invasion of the Kamchatka peninsula by the commander Vladimir Atlasov. His force of one hundred men killed twelve thousand Chukchi, and eight thousand Koryaks and Kamchadals respectively. Yet following an epidemic of suicides, local authorities were ordered to restrain natives from taking their own

lives.^[19] Thus, though a large proportion of indigenous Siberians did perish as a consequence of the Russian conquest of their lands, this was the result of economic exploitation, the brutal suppression of uprisings and the murderous zeal of individual military commanders rather than of any deliberate state policy of genocide.

A similar conclusion may be drawn regarding the treatment of the Kazakh nomads. Russian outposts were established along the northern edges of the Kazakh steppe as early as the sixteenth century, but the interior was incorporated only in the nineteenth century, between the 1820s and the 1860s. Like the Siberian indigenes, the Kazakhs bowed to the inevitable and did not offer widespread resistance to the Russian advance. There were, however, some local uprisings (as in 1836-7), provoked by the confiscation of traditional grazing grounds. As the nineteenth century wore on, the Kazakhs were greatly impoverished as they and their herds were squeezed into ever smaller areas of the steppe to make room for new Russian settlers, leading to population losses, though not on a truly genocidal scale.^[20] The idea of getting rid of an entire people, whether by means of forcible deportation or by genocide, therefore, does not appear to have arisen in previous Russian practice. The decision to deport the Circassians represented something new.

We find an interesting reflection of contemporary Russian perceptions of the Circassians in the books of western travellers sympathetic to Russian ambitions in the Caucasus. The Circassians are typically portrayed as primitive warlike barbarians and savage bandits. 'The peoples of Circassia and Abkhazia,' a French diplomat writes, 'have lived by piracy and brigandage from time immemorial ... Anger, vengeance and greed are their dominant passions.' A French tourist couple entertain their readers with the story of how a Polish lady was kidnapped by Circassians while on her way to take the waters at the spa of Kislovodsk, and recount how they managed to escape from pursuing Circassian horsemen as they rode through frontier territory from Stavropol to Yekaterinodar.^[21]

Do these hostile stereotypes constitute a warrant for genocide? Reading some authors, it is hard to avoid answering yes. Thus George Ditson, who claims to be the first American to visit Circassia and who dedicates his book to the Russian governor of the Caucasus, Prince Vorontsov, draws a direct parallel between the subjugation of the Circassians and that of the American Indians being accomplished at the same period. It turns out that this thought was suggested to him by the Russian Prince Kochubei, whom he approvingly cites as saying: 'These Circassians are just like your American Indians - as untamable and uncivilized ... and, owing to their natural energy of character, extermination only would keep them quiet' - though he does admittedly offer the alternative of 'employing their wild and warlike tastes against others.'^[22]

Historians of tsarist Russia conventionally stressed the desire to put an end to Circassian raids on existing Russian settlements and to clear new fertile lands for the settlement of landless peasants migrating from Central Russia in the wake of the abolition of serfdom as the motive behind the decision to deport the Circassians. As one influential account puts it:

In Chechnya and Daghestan [the central and eastern parts of the northern Caucasus] the Russians were satisfied with the natives' submission, but on the Black Sea coast they intended to gain possession of the wide and fertile Circassian lands to provide for a part of the great wave of Russian peasant migration resulting from emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Every year Cossacks and peasant migrants from central Russia were penetrating farther and farther up the affluents of the [Rivers] Kuban, Laba, Belaya and Urup. These new villages and stanitsy [Cossack settlements] were frequently raided by the Circassians who resented the Russian settlement of their tribal lands.^[23]

As the same authors point out, the resettlement of the Circassian lands was a partial failure. 'The Kuban region was thickly settled, but along the Black Sea coast the Russian, German, Greek and Bulgarian colonists proved unable to support the humid climate and the forest environment, and today the wilderness has conquered the Circassian orchards and gardens.'^[24]

More recently, Brooks has put forward an alternative view, more soundly based on detailed research into the writings of prominent Russian officials and generals of the time.^[25] He argues that their main motive was simply to secure reliable politico-military control by Russia of a strategically important area of the Caucasus. This goal seemed suddenly much more urgent in the 1850s after the Crimean War, which had underlined the danger of foreign intervention in the Black Sea region and the necessity of pre-empting it. However, close to a century of unsuccessful fighting had convinced frustrated Russian policy-makers that the Circassians could not be subdued, but only deported or exterminated. Thus the military campaign was not a response to the extraneous needs of settlement. On the contrary, it was only after victory was achieved that the generals pressed (in vain) for accelerated settlement to consolidate the conquest. Similarly, though the order of the Tsar was to deport the Circassians, not exterminate them, we have seen from the remark of Prince Kochubei, quoted above, that Russian officials and generals were not averse to the idea of exterminating a large proportion of the Circassians. General Fadeyev also attested to this when he wrote that the Russians decided 'to exterminate half the Circassian people in order to compel the other half to lay down their arms.'^[26]

So was it genocide? The deportation of the Circassians can certainly be regarded as an example of 'ethnic cleansing', in which massacres and the burning of villages served to force the Circassians into emigration. 'This great exodus', concludes Henze, 'was the first of the violent mass transfers of population which this part of the world has suffered in modern times.' He goes on, however, to suggest that it set a precedent for the Armenian genocide, implying that what happened was at least comparable to genocide.^[27] There was no obsession to wipe out every single Circassian, but there was a determination to get rid of them without delay, in the full knowledge that a large proportion of them were bound to perish in the process. As Count Yevdokimov recounts: 'I wrote to Count Sumarokov, why does he remind us in every report of the frozen bodies covering the roads? Do the Great Prince and I really not know this? But can anyone really turn back the calamity?'^[28] Such cynically feigned inadvertence reminds one of the tsar who 'commuted' a death penalty imposed on a soldier to a hundred lashes of the knout, knowing that he could hardly survive such an ordeal.

The End of the Circassians?

The catastrophe that befell the Circassians in the 1860s put their survival as a people at risk both inside the Russian empire (and later the Soviet Union and its successor states) and in exile. The impact of the deportations on the different Circassian sub-groups varied widely. Worst affected were the western and central tribes, several of which disappeared completely from the Caucasus, most notably the Ubykh, while others left behind only small remnants.^[29] A native population compactly residing throughout Circassia was thereby reduced to fragments, 'islands' that in the course of time were separated by an intervening 'sea' of Slav and other settlers. By 1917, the descendants of the Circassians remaining in Russia were scattered over many non-contiguous areas, in most of which they formed a minority. No single town had a Circassian majority.^[30]

The effect of this process was to weaken pan-Circassian identity and raise the salience of narrower identities. Thus the removal of the Ubykh, who had constituted the geographical and linguistic bridge between the Abkhaz and the northern Circassians, facilitated the development of a more distinct Abkhaz identity. Similarly, the isolation from other Circassian communities of those Shapsegh villages that remained in the Tuapse area heightened the sense of a separate Shapsegh identity. In the new geodemographic conditions created by conquest, deportation and the influx of settlers, tribes naturally tended to evolve into separate ethnic groups. The sense of being Circassian was not altogether lost, but what had previously been perceived as a single people came to be seen as a family of closely related but distinct ethnic groups.

The effects of the Soviet period on the ethnic identity of the Circassians, as on that of other indigenous peoples, were complex and shifting. In the 1920s and early 1930s, the policy of 'indigenization' (korenizatsiya) helped preserve Circassian language and culture from Russifying pressures. Four ethnic territories were created specifically for different groups of Circassians within the Russian Federation.^[31] In addition, the Abkhaz enjoyed considerable autonomy within the Republic of Georgia, and for some years (1921-31) even had a union republic of their own, loosely associated with Georgia. On the other hand, certain aspects of the indigenization policy did serve further to weaken and fragment Circassian identity. In 1927 what had previously been a single Circassian literary language was split into two separate literary languages: Kabard-Cherkess and Adygei.^[32] Also Circassian groups were, both in the 1920s and later, arbitrarily put together with the Karachai and Balkar, who speak a Turkic language, to form mixed ethnic territories.^[33] The later Soviet period witnessed a return to the policy of Russification - or, in the case of the Abkhaz, whose cultural rights were suppressed under Stalin – Georgianization.^[34] From the 1960s onwards, the Circassian language was only taught as a subject in the schools of the ethnic territories but was no longer employed as a vehicle of instruction.

With the collapse of the USSR, the lifting of controls over movement and communication facilitated a modest revival of shared Circassian identity. In some families, an 'unauthorized ethnic history' stressing the common Circassian roots of Kabardian, Adygei, Cherkess, Abaza and Abkhaz had been transmitted secretly from generation to generation, and this history could now be openly propagated.^[35] Links with the descendants of the Circassian exiles have been established, though efforts to attract the latter back 'home' have so far yielded scant results.

However, among the great majority of Circassians living in exile, the Circassian identity was better able to hold its own against narrower identities. The challenge it faced was of a different kind - that of gradual assimilation into the host societies of Turkey and the Middle East. Over time the exiled 'Circassians' tended to become 'Turks (or Jordanians, etc.) of Circassian descent'. Nevertheless, even in Turkey the younger generation still speak Circassian - albeit only poorly, as a second language - and profess a sentimental pride in the Circassian heritage.^[36] In Jordan, Palestine-Israel, Saudi Arabia and other countries that formed part of the Ottoman empire, compact communities of Circassians still exist. In Jordan Circassians exercise important functions as military officers and businessmen. Two Circassian villages remain in the Balkans, one in Kosovo and one in Transylvania.

So the Circassians have survived as a people. I expect that they will continue to survive in the foreseeable future - especially taking account of the social climate in the post-Soviet region and in a world now more conducive than ever to the preservation and revival of ethnic identity. Even Circassian sub-groups that were thought to be on - or over - the verge of extinction may survive. For example, Ubykh is often described as a dead language, and the death of the last living speaker of Ubykh has been reported more than once. However, a prominent Canadian specialist on the Circassians, Professor John Colarusso,^[37] informs me that among the descendants of the Ubykh living in Turkey there is now a small group of young people who are learning the Ubykh language from their grandparents and are intent on keeping the Ubykh identity alive. The Circassians, their stubborn and heroic resistance to conquest and to the horrors perpetrated against them by their conquerors will not be forgotten after all. And yet how close they came to slipping into oblivion. If the fate of the Armenians in Turkey and of the Jews of Europe is still widely remembered today, is that not largely thanks to the status and influence enjoyed by many of the Armenian and Jewish communities fortunate enough to survive elsewhere? The contrary case of the Circassians brings home to us how easily the genocide of a people can, under less favourable circumstances, still fade out of our historical consciousness.

Notes

1. The figure is derived from the results of the Soviet population census of 1989, which recorded the total population of the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Province as 415,000 (see Goskomstat SSSR, *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniya SSSR po dannym vsesoyuznoi perepisi naseleniya 1989 g.* (Moscow, 1991), 42. If one counts the closely related Abazins as Circassians, the proportion of the latter in the population rises to 16 percent. The rest of the population comprises Karachai, Russians, Nogai and other ethnic groups. The Circassians call themselves in their own language 'Adyghe'.
2. The Abkhaz, like the Abaza and the almost extinct Ubykh, are sometimes counted as Circassians and sometimes not. But they are certainly all closely related to the Circassians, and I include them as such.
3. These figures are taken from the book of the Circassian historian R. Trakho, *Cherkesy (Circassians - Northern Caucasians)* (Munich, 1956), 113. At various times earlier in its history Circassia also extended further northwards, to the lands Iying beyond the Sea of Azov.
4. Trakho is of the opinion that the Circassians adopted the Greek myths. Another Circassian historian claims that, on the contrary, it was the Greeks who took their myths from the Circassians! See Shauket Mufti (Habjoka), *Heroes and Emperors* (Beirut, 1944).
5. There is a theoretical controversy, to which I do not intend to contribute here, concerning whether 'nations' can be said to have existed before the modern period. Be that as it may, it is undeniable that there have existed since ancient times certain groups with a strong sense of common descent, culture and identity, though not necessarily ever united in a single political entity. These we may call 'proto-nations.' One such is the Circassians.
6. The Circassians' adoption of both Christianity and Islam was opportunistic and superficial. One ethnographer describes the religious beliefs of Abkhaz, for instance, as an eclectic mixture of pagan, Christian and Muslim elements. See Sula Benet, *Abkhasians: The Long-Living People of the Caucasus* (New York, 1974).
7. In fact, large-scale emigration to Turkey had started in 1858, when thirty thousand families had departed. However, news of the bad conditions awaiting the refugees there almost stopped the migration by the end of that year.
8. The following account draws on W.E.D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border. 1828-1921* (Cambridge, 1953), 107-8; Willis Brooks, 'Russia's conquest and pacification of the Caucasus: relocation becomes a pogrom on the post-Crimean period'. *Nationalities Papers*. 23, 4 (1995): 675-86, Trakho, *Cherkesy*. 32-56; Shauket, *Heroes and Emperors*.
9. The burning of villages was by no means a new practice. In the country of the Abadzekh alone, over a thousand settlements had burned between 1857 and 1859. Shauket, *Heroes and Emperors*, 237.
10. Shauket also tells us that the Ubykh had been weakened by a series of natural disasters in 1859: tremendous swarms of locusts had damaged the fields, a livestock epidemic had destroyed most of their cattle and horses, and a large proportion of their people had died from a disease similar to cholera. See Shauket. *Heroes and Emperors*, 245.
11. Trakho, *Cherkesy*, 50-51.
12. *Shauket, Heroes and Emperors*, 250.
13. Trakho, *Cherkesy*, 52-53.
14. Ibid. Moshnin's figures imply mortality rates following arrival in Turkey in the region of 2.5 to 5 percent per month.
15. See Brooks, 'Russia's conquest', 681.
16. This is a very rough estimate pending more detailed research. Another method of estimating the number of survivors would be to extrapolate backwards from later data for the population in Turkey descended from the deportees. In spite of its undoubtedly high birth rate, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that this population again reached two million.

17. Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York, 1967).
18. 'Kazakh' is a transliteration of the Russian word for this people. The government of Kazakhstan initiated a switch to 'Kazak,' which is a transliteration from the Kazakh language. Here I follow the more familiar usage.
19. See John J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford, 1994), esp. 23-24. Also useful is Yuri Slezkine. *Arctic Mirrors; Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca and London, 1994).
20. See Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, 1987), esp. chap. 4; and Shirin Akiner; *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State* (London, 1995).
21. See Le Chevalier Gamba [Consul of the King (of France) at Tiflis], *Voyage dans la Russie Méridionale et particulièrement dans les provinces situées au-delà du Caucase, fait depuis 1820 jusqu'en 1824* (Paris, 1826), vol. 1, 78; Xavier Hommaire De Hell, *Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea: The Crimea, The Caucasus*. (London, 1847), 286, 301-3.
22. George Leighton Ditson Esq., *Circassia; or A Tour to the Caucasus* (New York and London, 1850), x-xi; and Paul B. Henze, 'Circassian Resistance to Russia', in Marie Benningsen Broxup, ed., *The North Caucasus Barrier; The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World* (London, 1992), 80. Gamba, *Voyage*, 91-92, on the other hand, thought that the Circassians could be 'civilized' by a few years of orderly government and hard work. For other West-European writers, hostile to the expansion of the Russian Empire, the Circassians were indeed 'a wild people, known through so many centuries for their barbarism' - but *noble* rather than contemptible savages, friendly and hospitable to foreign visitors who have named a reputable *konak* (protector). See The Chevalier Taitbout de Marigny [Consul of His Majesty the King of the Netherlands at Odessa], *Three Voyages in the Black sea to the Coast of Circassia: including descriptions of the ports, and the importance of their trade: with-sketches of the manners, customs, religion of the Circassians* (London, 1887), 17; and the Englishman James Stanislaus Bell, *Journal of a Residence in Circassia During the Years 1837, 1838, 1839* (Paris, 1841), who found the Circassians to be of a pure and hardy character reminiscent of the ancient Greeks.
23. Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 107-8. One specific concern attributed to the Russian government was the need to secure safe access to and use of the new Black Sea port of Novorossiisk, at risk from its Circassian hinterland.
24. *Ibid.*, 108.
25. Brooks, 'Russia's conquest'.
26. Quoted in Trakho, *Cherkesy*, 51, from General Fadeyev's *Pis'ma s Kavkaza* (Letters from the Caucasus) of 1865.
27. See Henze, 'Circassian Resistance', 111.
28. Trakho, *Cherkesy*, 51,
29. Ronald Wixman, *Language Aspects of Ethnic Patterns and Processes in the North Caucasus* (University of Chicago, Dept. of History, Research Paper No. 191, 1980), 78-79.
30. For an account of the position of the Circassians in the Soviet period, see Rieks Smeets, 'Circassia,' *Central Asian Survey*, 14, 1 (1995): 107-125.
31. These were: (1) the Adygei-Cherkess Autonomous Province, created in 1922, in 1936 renamed the Adygei Autonomous Province; (2) the Cherkess Autonomous Province, 1926; (3) the Kabardian Autonomous Province, 1921; and (4) the Shapsugh National Country, 1922.
32. See Wixman, *Language Aspects*, 145.
33. That is, the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Province (in 1922-26 and again from 1957) and the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Province or Republic (from 1922 until the deportation of the Balkars in 1944, and then again from 1957).

34. The ethnic territories for Adygei, Cherkess and Kabard were formally retained. However, the Shapsegh lost their ethnic territory after the war, and repeated appeals for its restoration have been rejected at the insistence of the provincial authorities.
35. See Paula Garb, 'Ethnicity and Alliance Building in the Caucasus' (paper presented at 'The International Spread and Management of Ethnic Conflict Conference, University of California, Davis, March 1995). The 1990-onwards cultural festivals organized by the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus and the participation of Circassian volunteers from the Northern Caucasus on the Abkhaz side in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict have been additional factors in the revival of Circassian identity.
36. Divergent assessments on the degree of Circassian assimilation in Turkey can be found in Henze ('Circassian Resistance', 63), who argues for the continuation of a meaningful Circassian identity among them, and Smeets ('Circassia', 109 - 125), who is sceptical.
37. Of McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario.

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