

CIRCASSIANS

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ETHNONYMS. Adyghe, Circassians, Kabardians, Cherkess (Tscherkess), Dzhigets, Ubykhs (Oubykhs).

ORIENTATION. Identification. The Circassians and their close kinsmen, the Ubykhs, all call themselves Adyghe (three syllables). They originally inhabited an area of the northwestern Caucasus, though after the Russian conquest of 1864 fully half of them immigrated to the Ottoman Empire. Today they live not only in their original homeland, but also in scattered groups in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Yugoslavia, with small communities in Europe and North America (New Jersey, New York, and California). Within the Soviet Union they are found, going from west to east, in and around the Adyghej Republic (also known as Adygheja), the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, and the Kabardino-Balkar Republic, all three being federated with the Russian Republic. In Adygheja they share their territory with Ukrainians, in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic with Ukrainians, the Turkic Karachay and the Northwest Caucasian Abazas, and in the Kabardino-Balkar Republic with Great Russians and the Turkic Balkar. Racially they are of varied European type. In certain tribes there is a high incidence of blue eyes and blond or red hair, while others have dark hair with light complexions. Some groups show a propensity toward long aquiline faces and dolichocephalic heads, whereas others tend toward round faces and brachycephaly. Many have almond shape eyes and fine features. Epicanthic eye-folds are common. Their physical variety attests to their long and varied history. **Location.** Originally their homeland extended from the Black Sea coast at the mouth of the Sea of Azov (Taman Peninsula), down along the coast to the Psu river, thence over the Caucasian massif and southeastward along its eastern slopes down into the basins of the Baksan, Malka and Kuma rivers then into the so-called Kabardinian Plain to a point north of the Terek river, thence northwestwards to the course of the Kuban and along the south

bank of the Kuban back to the Taman Peninsula. This original homeland was bounded on the west by the Black Sea, on the Northwest by the Crimea, on the north by the Ukraine, on the east by the territory of the Chechens and Daghestanis, to the south by the upland territories of the Ossetians and the Georgian mountaineers and Svans, and to the southwest by the land of the Abkhaz. In terms of latitude and longitude (... , ...) their homeland encompassed roughly: NW (45° 30' N, 38° 09'E), NE (45° 00' N, 44° 45' E), SE (43° 00'N, 41° 05' E), SW (43° 30' N, 39° 00' E). On the coastal plains of the Black Sea (to the west of Adygheja) the climate is warm and humid, growing cooler as the Caucasian foothills are crossed. In the three administrative units the climate is cooler in the highlands and moderate in the rolling hills and plains of the lowlands, where more than half the year is frost free. Rainfall is moderate. Vegetation ranges from steppe meadows in the plains, to beech and oak forests in the foothills, to evergreen forests and alpine meadows in the mountains. There are many rivers and streams throughout the region, many of which run through heavily forested gorges.

Demography. The vast majority of Circassians live outside the Soviet Union, where their exact numbers are impossible to determine. The following estimates have been made: Turkey 150,000 - 1,000,000; Jordan 20,000 - 100,000; Israel 15,000; New Jersey, USA 18,000. Within the Soviet Union there are Cherkess 46,000, Kabardians 322,000, Adyghe 109,000, but the latter figure does not count many Circassians living to the west of the Adyghej Republic. The region of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic is overwhelmingly Ukrainian, with the Circassians accounting for only 9% of the population, that of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic has many Great Russians, with the Circassians roughly 50%, while that of the Adyghej Republic has no more than 25% natives within its boundaries, but perhaps greater than 50% in the region surrounding it. In all three regions the Circassians form a rural village population, with the cities being predominantly slavic.

Linguistic Affiliation. Circassian and Ubykh form two branches of the Northwest Caucasian language family, the third being the Abaza-Abkhaz branch. Ubykh (nearly extinct) formed a transitional language between Circassian and Abaza-Abkhaz. Circassian itself falls into a conservative Western or Kyakh language, often called Adyghean, and an Eastern one, Kabardian. Besleney, centered in the Karachay-Balkar Republic, is a dialect transitional between the two. Besleney has strongly influenced Abaza, the

Abkhaz language spoken in and around the republic. The languages of this family are remarkable for their complexity (for example, the verb can inflect for all persons in a sentence, and most of the vocabulary is formed from more basic roots by extensive processes of compounding), and for their radical departure from the grammatical patterns that characterize the dominating Turkic and Indo-European languages of this region. The nobility used a "hunting language" derived from standard Circassian by word-play and distortions. I was once told by an old Ossetian (Alexander Zuraetae) that the upper class Circassian women shared in a north Caucasian women's language which was monosyllabic with distinctive pitch. Professor Tamerlan Guri of the North Ossetic Research Institute has suggested that a special jargon or language for small girls was current among some Circassians, as it was among Ossetians. The hunting language died out in the 19th century; the women's (or girls') language survived into the 20th. Some attempts were made to formulate a Circassian written language in the 19th century, using the Arabic script. In the 1920s two literary languages emerged, Adyghean based on the Chemgwi (Temirgoy) dialect of West Circassians and Kabardian based on the Baksan dialect. The first alphabets were based on the Arabic script; then the Latin was adopted; and finally in the late 1930's the Cyrillic was used. Currently efforts are underway to devise a new Latin based script.

Folklorists both within and without the Soviet Union have recorded extensive texts in all the Circassian dialects and in Ubykh. In the Middle East only Israel allows publication of material in Circassian. **History.** At a remote period (3,000 B.C.) the Circassian homeland was the site of the Bronze-Age Kurgan culture, now identified with the Proto-Indo-Europeans. It is possible that the ancestors of the Circassians may themselves have taken part in this Kurgan culture, for very remote linguistic links between the Proto-Indo-Europeans and the Northwest Caucasians can be put forward. In any event, the Circassians have been in or near their homeland for millennia and have had contacts with the myriad peoples who have passed across the steppes to their north: the Proto-Indo-Europeans, the Kimmerians (whence the Circassian tribe of the Chemgwi, earlier Kemirgoy), the Scythians, Sarmatians and Alans, the Goths, the Huns, the Khazars, the Turkic peoples, the Mongols, and lastly the Cossacks, Ukrainians and Russians. During these millennia the Circassians knew almost constant warfare with these steppe neighbours. More

peaceful contacts prevailed between the Circassians and the Ancient Greeks in the trading cities along the Black Sea coast, and later between them and Genoese, and then Venetian traders. Between 1379 and 1516 AD Circassians formed a Mameluke dynasty that ruled over Egypt. There is some evidence linking these Mamelukes with the 14th century expansion of the Kabardians eastward of the Caucasian massif. Despite the lack of a centralized government the Kabardians formed a homogeneous political unit resembling a state, whereas the other Circassians remained organized around tribal and clan patterns. During their history the Circassians seem to have been conquered only three times. First by the Kök Turks, the first Turkic empire, second by the Mongols, and last by the Russians. When in the 16th century one of the Kabardian noble families, Kemirgoquo (russ. Temryuk) established close ties with the Russian court (the origin of the Cherkasski family) this was not seen by the Circassians as an act of submission. Nevertheless when Tsarist imperial ambitions brought Russian troops to the Caucasus in force in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Kabardians did not offer prolonged resistance, whereas their kinsmen to the west fought on, at first under Ottoman support and then independently, until 1864, five years after the fierce Daghestanis and Chechens had surrendered. An account of this Circassian resistance has been written by Henze (1990), though many details remain to be documented. After defeat fully half of the Circassians, including many Kabardians and all the Ubykhs (as well as all the "Fighetts," a tribe of uncertain affiliation), sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire. There they were scattered to the furthest, least desirable regions where many died of hunger and disease. This emigration was a crucial error, for in the Empire and its successor states they have known as much repression as their compatriots who stayed behind. Recently (1991) the old Soviet administrative units, the Adyghej Autonomous Oblast, the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast and the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic were elevated in status to three republics, and were allowed to fly the old common Circassian flag, the Sangyak Sherif, with three crossed arrows and above them two arcs of stars (nine above and three below, one for each tribe) all on a deep green background. Cultural affairs for all three republics are governed by one common Circassian cultural council, or Khasa. A program for the repatriation of diaspora Circassians has been instituted and some few have in fact returned to grants

of land and other incentives. All these changes have survived the dissolution of the USSR itself. The avowed goal of the Circassians is an ethnically and linguistically pluralistic society in which Circassian cultural institutions can once again enjoy a territorial basis. The future of the region promises to be interesting. **Cultural Relations.** The Circassians in the Soviet Union underwent forced resettlement onto Kolkhozes and into new villages in the lowlands. Traditional housing styles were replaced with standard Soviet rural brick homes with small plots around them. Some Circassians have moved to the new local cities and have established themselves in modern urban life. The Circassians in Turkey are still largely peasants, with a few that have taken to military careers. The Ubykhs still persist as a distinct type of Adyghe, but their language is now spoken only by one man and one woman. In Jordan the Circassians are concentrated in and around Amman, where they own a great deal of property and have been entrusted with the state electrical and power monopoly. They enjoy Circassian radio and television, but are not allowed to publish in their language. In Syria the Circassians were concentrated in five villages in the Golan Heights. After the '67 Arab-Israeli War these Circassians withdrew into Syria, specifically to slum districts of Damascus. Finding their settlements unacceptable, they petitioned the USA in the mid-seventies to be granted asylum. The USA initiated a program with the aid of the Tolstoy Foundation of New York City to enable many of these Circassians to immigrate into America where they settled in New Jersey and New York City. In Israel the two villages of Circassians appear to enjoy relative freedom and have a tradition of serving Israel as an elite border patrol. In the USA the Circassian communities are largely urban. Here there is considerable tension and debate between those few who came directly from the Caucasus and the vast majority who have come from the Middle East as to the purity of their traditions and the best way to salvage their heritage, for there is considerable anxiety that they are destined for extinction as a people. Some harbor dreams of a repatriation of all Circassians to the Caucasus, and there is a movement, based in Holland, dedicated to achieving that end by peaceful means. It might be mentioned that the only Ubykhs outside of Turkey reside in southern California. **SETTLEMENTS.** The traditional Circassian wuna was a long rectangular house with a porch extending along its front. It was made of wattle coated with mud, with a thatch roof. The kitchen and eating area

had a conical flue over the hearth. There were several rooms, including at least one for the womenfolk. The house itself had a vegetable garden behind it, and several satellite houses for sons and their families, as well as outbuildings for livestock and food storage. This complex was enclosed in a stockade. Close to this perimeter was a guest house for visitors. The main house would have a large tree planted before its door to symbolize the growth and strength of the family. The whole complex would be near a forest where the family could take shelter in the event of a raid. These units would be spaced fairly far apart along the course of a river, generally in the higher country, though trading posts were in the lowlands. Thus, the traditional Circassian village was much like a necklace, with a river for its chain. Today, in the lowland villages to which they have been moved in the Soviet Union standardized small brick country homes with surrounding garden plots have replaced traditional patterns. In their immigrant villages in the Middle East, the wuna is still built and the extended family compound can still be found, but the other traditional features have vanished. In the Soviet Union cities have been established. In Adygheja there is Maikop, with nearby Armavir and Krasnodar laying outside its boundary . In the Karachay- Cherkess Republic there is Cherkessk and the nearby Stavropol. In the Kabardino-Balkar Republic there is Nalchik and the nearby Mozdok. These centers do have Circassian institutes and schools, and some Circassians have taken up life in them where they work in the industries, but there are no official statistics regarding how many. In Maikop, for example it seems that of a population of 105,000 roughly 20% is Circassian.

ECONOMY. Subsistence and Commercial Activities. Traditionally the Circassians practiced agriculture and animal husbandry. They grew a variety of grains (millet, maize, wheat, rye), fruit, vegetables, and nuts. They raised chickens, cows, sheep, goats, pigs and especially horses. Many families were known for their horse breeds, and skill in horsemanship was highly valued. Apiculture was also practiced, producing honey and mead. In the highlands hunting also supplemented the food supplies. The traditional diet consisted of bread, pilaf-like dishes, milk and cheeses, thick gruels made of various grains, vegetable and fruit dishes, and the occasional meat dish in a spicy nut sauce. **Industrial Arts.** Home industries in metal-working, leather goods, cloth and clothing were also pursued. As a group Circassians show considerable dexterity and geometric sense, and some immigrants are surgeons or

precision machinists. **Trade.** The two tribes of the Black Sea coast, the Natukhay and Shapsegh appear to have engaged in trade. It is not clear whether this was also the case with the Ubykhs, who also lived along the coast. In this honor oriented culture money and material possessions were and still are treated with disdain, and trade was not as extensive as raiding. **Division of Labor.** Men tended to metal and leather working, and even some sewing. Women tended to household chores, the vegetable garden, spinning and weaving. Men tended to animal husbandry, especially that of horses, but both sexes helped in planting and harvesting. The men hunted. **Land Tenure.** In the Soviet Union there was no private property. Now land is being slowly turned over to private ownership. Earlier, land was passed down from father to son, with several sons often dividing a large holding. Sometimes sons would move off with their families to establish homesteads elsewhere. With a history of nearly constant warfare overcrowding seems never to have been a problem.

KINSHIP. Kingroups and Descent. Families were patrilocal and partially patriarchal. Descent was patrilineal. Nuclear families had mixed rule. The wife had authority over many household matters, but the husband was ultimate arbiter in cases of dispute. When the nuclear families were gathered into an extended one, which was usually the case, the father of the sons and his wife assumed comparable roles over the whole. The extended family itself was set within the larger context of the tlapq, the blood frame or clan, consisting of linear and collateral male relatives, with their position in this framework determined by their tl'aqu, the male descendants of a particular ancestor. Members of a tlapq all share a common name, though only patronymic and given name (in that order), and nicknames were used socially.

Kinship Terminology. Kinship terminology is analytical. It reads like a literal translation of the anthropologist's elicitation list: 'father's sister's son' [= cousin]. In West Circassian consanguineal terms must show inalienable possession (for example one must say s-qwo 'my-son'), while affinal are alienable. 'Father,' 'mother' and 'wife' show alienable possession, but with a special intimate association prefix. The semantics of this analytical system show some peculiarities. For example, 'brother' is (in Bzhedukh West Circassian) sh'he and 'daughter' is pkhu, and yet together they form 'sister,' sh'he-pkhu. Imposed on this kin network is a set of emotional relationships that have made this system a paradigm within kinship

theory: the Cherkess-Trobriand kinship system. The relationship of husband to his wife and children is very formal and limited in a public setting (saying nothing of the actual emotional content of these relationships within the privacy of the home). The relationship of a woman to her brother(s) and of her children to their maternal uncle(s) is on the contrary highly spontaneous and familiar. Male ego's brother's sons are his sons. A widow is supported by her husband's surviving brothers.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY. Marriage. Marriages were based on love or interest on the part of both man and woman, as long as exogamy beyond the clan was observed, and both members were deemed Adyghe. Flirting took place around the well or stream, and romantic trysts were arranged by maternal uncles. Marriage was late, usually taking place in the early thirties. The ceremony consisted of a nocturnal abduction, with the young man assisted by his friends, the family of the bride offering token resistance and pursuit. A bride price was paid beforehand. The woman came to live with her in-laws, who held a celebration upon her arrival, which often consisted of several days of feasting and horse races. The young men would observe the odd custom of vying with one another to be the first to throw themselves on the bed of the newlyweds before the couple themselves could use it. At one time the young women wore elaborately knotted tight leather corsets to ensure a thin figure. After the wedding night this had to be publicly presented intact as a sign that the groom had exhibited self-control. In some tribes divorces were common, amounting almost to a pattern of sequential marriages. The man continued to support his "divorced" wife and children. Both men and women could obtain divorces. In a valid (legally recognized) divorce the bride price was not repaid. In a justified divorce the family of the woman had to repay it. **Domestic Unit.** Outside of urban centers the extended family is the most common unit, this consisting of an elder man and his wife, their sons and their wives, with perhaps yet more elderly parents relegated to the status of merely honorary heads of the household. There are no statistics on its size, but it must tend to be large for the Circassians in the Caucasus have grown substantially in population during this century (100,000 in the twenty years between 1950 and 1970) despite heavy persecution under Stalin. Because of extreme longevity in certain areas of the Caucasus the extended family may include as many as four or five generations. The extended family itself forms

part of a clan with matrimonial and other social links to certain other clans. The clans are characterized by "surnames". Since the sons of a man's brother were considered his own sons, the nuclear family could be enlarged at the death of a brother by a man taking on the surviving widow and her children, though the widow was technically not a co-wife. **Inheritance.** The males alone inherited land and other significant wealth. **Socialization.** Children were taught to be respectful, particularly of the elderly, and often enjoyed loving relationships with the elders in a village while they often helped the elderly with their needs, waiting upon them at banquets and such. Boys were taught to be proud both of their clan and of their social presence, to show courage and stamina, and to acquire skill in arms and horsemanship. Girls were taught to be discrete, to observe household etiquette and patterns, to be graceful, and to be knowledgeable regarding remedies and cures. Girls were taught to be thoughtful and generous hostesses, so that they could observe the all-important functions of welcoming and housing guests. Girls of marriageable age were given their own reception room in which they could entertain young men. A code of strict etiquette governed such entertainment, and at the first offensive or suggestive remark from the young man the girl would summon one of her male kinsmen to eject him. Both sexes were taught to dance, a paramount form of socializing. Refinement and skill in speech was valued for both sexes. Respect was displayed toward someone, especially the elderly, not only by standing in their presence, but also by standing at the mere mention of their name.

SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION. Social Organization. With the exception of the Natukhay and Shapsegh tribes all Circassians were organized into four castes: princes (pshi), nobles (warg), freemen (tlfaquat'l) (Kabardian tlkhwaquat'l), and slaves or vassals (pshit'l). Within these rigid strata various families had rankings. The princes organized the overall wealth (storing and distributing surplus) and external relations of their village. They conducted raids and warfare, drawing upon the fighting skills of the nobles. The freemen practiced agriculture, animal husbandry, and small industry. The slaves, usually prisoners of war, served the princes and nobles as servants and workers. Today this old system survives merely as a tradition of origin for families. Its dissolution was precipitated by the emigration of most of the freemen and slaves in 1864, with the princes and nobles primarily staying in the

Caucasus. There is a tradition that this emigration followed a bout of internecine warfare between the social castes after the defeat by the Russians. The most important form of social organization among the present-day Circassians of the Russian Federation consists of a Circassian Council (Adyghe-khaasa). This is composed of elders from all the various Circassian groups, and its cultural and social authority transcends the boundaries of the three political regions to encompass all Circassians living in or near the Caucasus. In 1989 it was influential in dissuading many Circassian youth from going south to help their Abkhaz kinsmen in the fighting between the latter and the Georgians. Further, in 1990 to bolster its cultural role and perhaps to reward it for its prudence Moscow granted the Council a sum of several million rubles to encourage the growth of Circassian cultural institutions and activities throughout the Caucasus.

Political Organization. The prince presided over a village and promoted village cohesion with feasts, bestowing honor among individuals by assigning to them the position of t'hamata, master of ceremonies. Outside the village the highest level of organization was the tribe. These were the Ubykh, the Natukhay, the Shapsegh, the Hakuchi, the Abadzekh, the Bzhedukh, the Hatukay, the Yegerukhay, the Chemgwi (earlier Kemirgoy), the Mamkhet, the Makhochey, the Besleney and the Kabardians. The Bzhedukh consisted of two sub-tribes, the Khamych and Chercheney. These tribes themselves had rankings, with the Kabardians considered high because of their cultural and political influence, and the Ubykh high because of old religious status, whereas the Shapseghs and Natukhay were looked down upon because of their lack of a caste system and their involvement in trade. Tribes had councils of princes, and grand councils could be called involving more than one tribe. Tribes were based upon fictive kinship, such as the Besleney 'Those of (Prince) Beslen,' or regional identity, such as Abadzekh 'Those in the region of the Abaza.' Others may reflect ancient cases of assimilation, as with the Natukhay 'White (= light)Eyed Ones,' perhaps Circassianized Crimean Goths, or the Shapsegh 'Pointed Head or Hat Ones,' perhaps an old Alanic tribe.

Social Control. A body of oral, traditional law tightly governed conduct. Further, rules of etiquette were extremely important, these usually consisting hospitality coupled with discreteness in conversation bordering on taciturnity. The wrong words could slight social face and engender bloody conflict. The princes and nobles practiced fosterage with their slaves or vassals. It was

a great honor for a vassal to rear a child of his prince or noble. The child was returned to his biological home at maturity. The greatest honor for a vassal was for such a mature child to choose to stay in the house of the slave, to become a qan 'one who remained.' Such fosterage formed a fictive blood link between slave and master. **Conflict.** A Circassian was never without his dagger, and few things were more important to him than his weapons. This reflected the prevalence of the blood feud. Indeed, the word 'vengeance' (tlish'ezhen 'to make blood again') must take inalienable possession in West Circassian. The blood feud in turn sprang from the khaabza 'custom, law' that any death inflicted upon a member of another clan, regardless of whether it was intentional or accidental, had to be avenged by a corresponding death. The obligation of blood feud extended to the protection of one's guests as well as to one's "milk brother," a fictive kinship bond. Indeed, blood feud obligations could be abrogated by a man of one clan putting his lips to the breast of a woman of the other, thereby forming a fictive kin link of milk brotherhood between the two warring groups. Blood feud obligations were temporarily suspended during times of war, so that armies could be assembled. Women tended to be outside the blood feud. Injuries were recompensed by money determined by a council of elders or by the prince. Theft of livestock had to be conducted between clans. Theft of material goods could be conducted within a clan by stealth, it being a disgrace to be caught. This reflected the relative contempt for material possessions. In fact, if a fellow asked for some item, one was obligated to give it. In this way material goods tended to circulate among the community. In matters of dispute, the council of elders, headed by the prince, interpreted khabza to reach a settlement. Such decisions were usually obeyed since the dreaded blood feud was the most often alternative. A husband could mete out punishment for violations within the sphere of the family. Women enjoyed great respect and status in that they could halt the bloodiest fights merely by dropping their kerchief between the combatants. A maiden could also bestow her kerchief upon a favoured youth, in classic feudal manner, so that he could act as her champion in acts of valor and adventure.

RELIGION AND EXPRESSIVE CULTURE. Religious Beliefs. The Circassians have been Sunni Moslems for the past three or four hundred years, though as late as the first half of the 19th century some of the woodland Abadzekh seem to have retained a form of Christianity. The Circassianized Armenians, Yermedls, of Armavir are Christian and there were some Jewish Circassians in the bodyguard of Chaim Weizmann, the founder of Zionism. Nevertheless, many pagan relics are to be found in their oral traditions, particularly the heroic Nart Sagas or Nart Epics, which are neither sagas nor epics at all, but myths of great antiquity with many striking parallels to the mythologies of Ancient India, Greece and Scandinavia. Herein are a host of pagan gods, each dedicated to one simple function, such as the god of cattle, the god of forests, the god of the forge, a female fertility figure, etc. The gods held Olympian banquets led by their own t'hamata at which they drank a sacred brew, sana. They conducted war and intrigues. The gods themselves had gods, but these were nameless. Also evident from the folkore is a belief that the universe was self-creating and that the world had no boundary and is made up of nine layers. In the myths are numerous monsters, cyclopien giants, lizard men, demons, giant eagles, and dragons. Heroes are defined by slaying these monsters, by thrusting their weapons into all nine layers of the earth and then by being the only ones capable of extricating them again, and by their prodigious appetites and thirsts. Certain groves and large trees were held to be sacred. **Practitioners.** Old engravings show that the prince conducted religious ceremonies among the Christian Abadzekh. Today the community elects an immam. **Supernaturals.** Various individuals were thought to be warlocks or witches, with the power of the evil eye, and control over the weather and the well-being of livestock. A woman could not cross a man's path if she was carrying an empty pail, without running the risk of being labelled a witch. There was a belief in ghosts as well, demonic forms that lurked in cemeteries. Eclipses of the sun were thought to be casued by a devil. **Ceremonies.** The Abadzekh conducted a dance around a tree to the god of thunder whereat they offered sana (wine), calling it 'The Peaceful One.' Other Circassians would shoot arrows at nearby lightning bolts and then look for blood to see if they had made a hit. The Abadzekh princes would also sacrifice cattle before the cross. Other rites seem to have been conducted in sacred groves or before a sacred tree. Funerals were accompanied by wailing among the

women. The deceased's clothes were displayed, and, if a man, his weapons were also laid out. The dead were buried at an early period in tumuli, and later in cemeteries. Much effort was expended to retrieve the bodies of those killed on raids for burial in tribal soil. Today the usual Moslem holidays and rituals are observed. **Arts.** Oral lore is of paramount importance among the Circassians. They view it as the chief monument of their civilization. Their folklore is extremely rich and varied. There are tales of battles with the Goths, the Huns, the Khazars and the early Russians. Both men and women can be bards. This folklore has served in the 20th century as a base for a modern literature both of poetry and prose. It has been collected in seven volumes, Nartkher (The Narts) by A. M. Hadaghat'la (Gadagatl). Some writing exists from the 19th century, but most is a product of this century. Some material has been produced in Jordan, most notably by the late Kube Shaban and this has now been published in Maikop. Most Circassian literature, however, is a Soviet product, some of it is extremely good and deserving of translation, especially such works as A. Shogentsuk(ov) (1900-1941) Kambot and Liatsa (1934-6)(in Kabardian), A. Shortan(ov)'s (born 1916) Bgheriskher (The Mountaineers) (1954) (in Kabardian) or Yu. Tliusten's (born 1913) Wozbaanuguokher (The Ozbanokovs) (1962) (in Chemgwi). The collected works of major writers are still appearing, such as those of T. Ch'arasha (1987-89)(in Chemgwi). Bards are still active and their output recorded, such as Ts. Teuchezh with The Uprising of the Bzhedugs (1939)(in Bzhedukh). There is also an active theatrical and play-writing industry, with such playwrights as I. Tsey (1890-1936), Dzh. Dzhagup(ov) and M. M. Shkhagapso(ev), among many others. For an ethnic group of its size, both the Circassian literary output and community are prodigious. Circassian song had a lead singer accompanied by a chorus, either on the same melodic line or in a counterpoint. Syncopation and triplets were abundantly used. Today in Jordan and the Circassian Republics there are Circassian composers writing in variants of Western polyphonic styles, such as N. S. Osman(ov), D. K. Khaupa and U. Tkhabisim(ov) (to mention just a few), as well as Circassian musicians and conductors, such as K. Kheishkho and Iu. Kh. Temirkhan(ov). Pictorial arts are based upon folk motifs, which are pleasing scrollwork designs of floral and corniform patterns on open backgrounds. It might be added here that the elegant folk costumes of the men's cherkesska, a caftan-like tight coat with cartridges across the chest,

worn with a sheepskin hat, and the women's flowing gown with long oblate false sleeves, have spread throughout the Caucasus and have even been adopted by the neighboring Turkic and Slavic Cossack peoples as festive dress. Finally, sculpting in wood is still done, usually employing a tree stump to produce a bust or totem pole-like representation of a god or heroic figure. For example, outside Maikop, in a children's playground on the edge of a wood can be found several such figures, one a knight in armor, one a mushroom with a distorted face on its stem, another a totem pole-like representation of the god of the hunt, She-Batinuquo, with a wolf or dog sprouting from his right shoulder and an eagle soaring atop his head. **Science.** The Circassians have produced a notable number of outstanding linguists, such as Z. I. Kerash(eva), G. V. Rogava, A. A. Hatan(ov), M. A. Kumakh(ov) and Z. Iu. Kumakh(ova), among others, who have helped establish literary norms for their dialects by producing dictionaries and grammars, while at the same time writing a wide range of theoretical articles. Prominent among native folklorists is A. M. Hadaghat'la (Gadagatl), who has also written plays. Native archaeologists are making interesting finds on a steady basis, one of the latest ones being rich in gold and golden armor along with relics of what seem to have been an ancient Circassian script. **Medicine.** Traditional medicine was the provenance of the women, who were highly esteemed for their skills and knowledge. Healing and medicinal springs were also prized. These were viewed as going back to a warrior princess, Amazon (the source for our Amazon tradition), 'The Forest Mother,' skilled in medicine and from whose blood the first healing spring arose. **Death and the Afterlife.** After a life spent largely outdoors the Circassian viewed paradise as a comfortable, well-stocked room. The more virtuous the life led, the bigger and more sumptuous the room of eternity. It was said that a man was so bad that his afterlife room would be so small that he would not be able to turn over in it. From the Nart Sagas the realm of the dead appears to have been under the grave mound. The souls of the dead were guarded from supernatural depredations by a little old man and woman. Links were maintained with the dead by setting a place setting for them for one full year after death. Toasts were offered up to them by the t'hamata at feasts, and feasts were held in their memory. A particularly illustrious warrior could serve as the head for a t'lawuzhe, 'the

successors to a man,' and thereby be remembered by name even if his lineage did not achieve the status of a clan.

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