

Aleppo

[...] “The desert again. It was after ten, dark. Suddenly we saw a stone mark which indicated that there were one hundred and twenty kilometres left to Aleppo. I sighed heavily. One of the Arabs sitting opposite of me was watching me and said, “Khavaja zabakhtan,” which meant “You have been forsaken.” Christ used the same expression during His greatest suffering on the cross, “Eli, Eli, lamma sabachtani!” I was glad that the word was still alive that I had heard it just a moment ago from that uneducated man, probably a craftsman. I was overcome with joy; so my journey through this Dantean night had a purpose! Still, we were very far from the direct destination of our journey. A city again. It was Homs, i.e. the ancient famous city of Emesa. One of its famous residents had been the Neapolitan Nemesius, the author of the philosophical treatise on human soul. (...) A not very tall man came over to me. I had the impression he was one of the passengers. – “The elderly woman who travels with me noticed that,” the stranger continued. “I call her my aunt because of her age, although she is not exactly my aunt. She is leaving for Turkey tomorrow, and I am escorting her to the train station in Aleppo. She noticed you at once,” he continued after the introduction, “and told me you could not be an Arab because you were not doing any fuss here and you had a kind heart, because you gave figs to the boy.”

[...] “What nationality are you?”

I asked him. “I am Circassian,” he said and, seeing my astonishment, he added at once, “We have physically deteriorated in this land, among these people. There are no such handsome men, as the legends tell, left among us. Still we are superior to others in our spirit, cunning and intelligence. For example, my aunt, who is not exactly my aunt (and he repeated the same story) has learnt Turkish and Arabic in a very short time; she came from Kabarda several years ago.”

I told him that I also came from the Caucasus, from Georgia, and that I currently lived in Warsaw. “I have a friend there,” he interrupted me, “editor Baytugan.

I have not met him personally; we used to write to one another. I used to receive the magazine for Caucasian highlanders, *Şimali Kafkasya*, of which he was the editor. I gained three new subscribers for the magazine several years ago. Then I was ill and I could not send the money, and I have not received the magazine for a long time now.”

I promised I would settle the matter in Warsaw and that the magazine would be sent to him.

“I have also,” he continued, “written an article about Circassian horses for the magazine. However it has not been printed.”

Such a man, who worked far away on site, must be encouraged, so I assured him that his work would be taken into consideration.

He had much information about our Caucasian federation, and he had contacts among various Circassians holding important posts here.

There were many senior officials among them. Nearly the entire French cavalry there, various posts in the army, police and gendarmerie were staffed by Circassians. They were also quite numerous among civilian officials. Armenians were their only competitors there.

The man was a teacher at the Circassian school in Quneitra.

“Some time ago, a Georgian used to be the French teacher at your school. Did you know him?” I asked him and told him the name of my fellow countryman.

“I do not know him, and no one in Quneitra knows him,” he answered me on reflection.

A group of Arab Bedouins came up to us. One of them was going to Aleppo with his whole family. They asked the Kabardian who I was and what I was looking for. They had no idea about scientific or tourist travel. For them, anyone who left his homeland was a rich and a stupid man looking for adventures in a strange land. They called this fancy.

“If he has no business in Aleppo and is going there just for a fancy,” said one of them, “he would better return to Beirut at once. This is the last place he can take a train from; there is no communication further on”

However now, especially that I had an interesting travel companion, I had to go to the end.

He claimed he had never had such a bad trip as this one and he was afraid his aunt might be late for the train, which would leave Aleppo to go to Turkey at six o'clock in the morning. The next day he was going back to Beirut, where he had a business to settle, and suggested we could go together.

We had to board the bus. The engine had finally been repaired and we set off.

More passengers joined us in the city. When I had been talking to the Kabardian, a Bedouin had taken my seat by the window and he did not want to give it back to me. This cost a lot of shouting and irritation, both from the Kabardian and my neighbor, the Arab from Dair az Zaur on the Euphrates and from the Arab who had told the great and marvelous word “zabakhtan” to me, as they all were trying to remove the Bedouin from my seat.

“This is the worst seat,” the Kabardian told me. “You should always seat next to the driver, but that costs seventy five piasters.”

“And I paid a whole pound, which means a hundred piasters, for my seat,” I answered. He was outraged by this new proof of Arab mischief.

“How can they abuse a stranger in such a dishonorable way?” he asked the Arab living by the Euphrates. Tough luck. No one would give twenty five piasters back to me. Hopefully, they would not throw me out of the bus in the middle of the road!

We dragged on. The Arab who had argued about the three piasters and seemed to be a very poor man was now engaged in some business negotiations with another Arab and took out a thick wad of banknotes. My neighbor had started dozing and unintentionally touched the back of a Bedouin, who started yelling. Another argument. I could not sleep, so I stood up and I left my seat to the Arab from the Euphrates. The Bedouin, who had wanted to take my seat, was snoring in a corner. He was nearly lying on the poor boy. He was dirty and frothing at the mouth. We arrived in Aleppo at a quarter to five [...]

[...] During the one hundred and sixty kilometers' route to Haifa the road ran along the sea coast, between the borders of Sidon and Tyre. I was glad that everything had ended so well. I was only sorry I had not seen the Kabardian again. Never mind. The Circassian issue is very interesting and it is impossible to study it during one night on a train. It will be worthwhile to come here again for that purpose and devote more time to this important issue. New great prospects open up to this nation, and we must help it achieve that. Once, when the nation ruled in Egypt and Asia Minor, it did much good for the Georgian culture since it patronized the Georgian monasteries and monks in those countries. I even have unknown documents, which show how the Muslim Mameluks made contributions to the Georgian monasteries.

Now it is our turn! Whose? Our emigration's... I suddenly stopped my train of thought. It was so pleasant and marvelous here! We seemed to be going through a paradise; the sea was on the right hand, and the mountains, villages and blooming gardens on the left [...]

The fragment of the story “The Roses of Jericho. Diary of a Journey the Holy Land and Syria (5 July-28 September 1936)”, Saint Grigol Peradze, *Diaries*, ed. by David Kolbaia, Warsaw 2021.



National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi

The First North Caucasus Conference
Centre for East European Studies University of Warsaw
The 90th Anniversary of Oriental Studies at the University of Warsaw

Ethno-Cultural Problems of the Circassian Nation

Potockich Palace, University of Warsaw
November 7-9, 2022

Institute of Caucasology Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
Circassian (Adyghean) Culture Center in Georgia

TYPES DES RACES CAUCASIENNES; D'APRÈS UN CROQUIS DU PRINCE GAGARINE.



Teheresse, musulman sunnite. Mingrélien, chrét., rel. grecq. Tatar nogais, musul. sunnite. Georgian, chrét., rel. grecq. Arménien, chr., égl. d'Arm. ad. du diable. Kurde, musulman chéite. Tatar du Chirvah, musulman chéite. Indien de Banou, adorateur du feu. Lesguin, musulman chéite. Cosaque du Terek, chr., rel. gr., vieux croyant.

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Conference Programme

DAY 1 | MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2022

at the Balowa Room, Potockich Palace, University of Warsaw

SESSION I – 5.00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m.

Welcome Addresses to the Conference Participants: The ceremony will be attended by the Authorities of the Faculty of Oriental Studies University of Warsaw, ambassadors and many other distinguished guests

Piotr Taracha, Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies University of Warsaw. President of the Committee of Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences

Jan Malicki, Director of the Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland
Merab Chukhua, Circassian Culture Center, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia
Ishaq Mola, Former Ambassador, Jordan Establishing an International Circassian Movement, Jordan

Opening Speeches:

Iyad Youghar, The chairman of the International Circassian Council, United States of America
Adel Bashqawi, Circassian author, Amman, Jordan
Ibrahim Yagan, Head of Adyge-khase (Qabarda), Adyge
Karina Vamling, Russia, Ukraine and the Caucasus Regional Research, Malmö University, Sweden

Keynote Lectures:

Wojciech Górecki, Centre for Eastern Studies, Poland
Memory Wars in the North-West Caucasus. The post-Soviet period

David Kolbaia, Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland
Wpływ konfliktów północnokaukaskich po rozpadzie ZSRR na kształtowanie się relacji narodów kaukaskich [The influence of the North Caucasus conflicts after the collapse of the USSR on the relations between the Caucasian nations]

Presentations: New scientific publications about Caucasus and Caucasians 2021/2022.
Karina Vamling, Malmö University, Sweden; Merab Chukhua, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Glass of wine

DAY 2 | THUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2022

at the Balowa Room, Potockich Palace, University of Warsaw

SESSION II – 10.00 a.m. – 1.40 p.m.

Moderators: Karina Vamling, Russia, Ukraine and the Caucasus Regional Research, Malmö University, Sweden; Former Ambassador Tomash Knothe, Caucasus Seminar, Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland

Iyad Youghar, Chairman of the International Circassian Council, United States of America
Circassians Must Have Circassia

Paul Goble, The Institute Word Politics; Former Special Advisor to the Secretary of State; Former Senior Advisor to the Director, Voice of America, United States of America
Putin's War in Ukraine has Opened the Way for Circassians to Achieve Their Goals
(online participation)

Merab Chukhua, Circassian Culture Center in Georgia, Institute of Caucasology, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia
Circassian Issue: Questions and Answers

Georges Mamoulia, l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, France
Reports of the French Consuls in Tiflis as sources on the history of the National
Liberation Struggle of the Highlanders of the North Caucasus

Shahla Kazimova, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland
The image of the Circassians in Polish literature of the 19th Century

Discussion: Former Ambassador Tomasz Knothe, Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland

11.30 a.m. – 12.00 p.m. *Coffee break*

Lars Funch Hansen, Caucasus Studies, Copenhagen University, Denmark
Coloniality and Indigeness: Colonialism and decolonisation in the Russian Empire and the USSR in the 19th and 20th centuries

Kamelia Penkowska, School of Social Sciences, University of Warsaw, Poland
National policy of the Republic of Türkiye towards the Circassian community

Lidia Zhigunova, Department of Germanic & Slavic Studies, Tulane University, United States of America
Circassian Transnationalism and Decolonial Practices in the 21st Century

Denis Sokolov, Expert of the WOT Foundation in Warsaw, Poland
The current war and the North Caucasus

Martin Kochesokov, President of the public organization "Khabze" Nalchik, Adige
'Khabze' as the basis of the national identity of the Circassians

Discussion: Iyad Youghar, Chairman of the International Circassian Council, United States of America, Ishaq Mola, Former Ambassador, Jordan Establishing an International Circassian Movement, Amman, Jordan

1.40 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. *Lunch break*

SESSION III – 3.00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m.

the Balowa Hall of Potockich Palace of the University of Warsaw

Moderators: Fatima Tlis, Editor, Polygraph.info, Voice of America, United States of America;
Sarah Slye, Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Karina Vamling, Russia, Ukraine and the Caucasus Regional Research, Malmö University, Sweden
The representation of the Caucasus and Caucasian peoples in early Swedish newspapers from the 17th and 18th centuries

Sarah Slye, Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom
The Caucasian Nations' Mistakes and Failed Strategies in Securing European Support for the Independence and Liberation Projects of 1917 to 1945: Historical Lessons as the Basis for a Renewed Strategy

Agata Nowak, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland
Cherkes diaspora in Turkey: from Ottoman to modern times

Konrad Zasztowt, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland
The role of Circassians in the Turkish war of independence: the case of Çerkes Ethem

Aidamir Kazanokov, Circassian Media, Adyge
Circassian perspective

Discussion: Sarah Slye, Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

4.40 p.m. – 5.00 p.m. *Coffee break*

Tadeusz Krząstek, Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland
Górale Północnego Kaukazu w Wojsku Polskim (1919-1945)

Mariam Bezhitashvili, Circassian Cultural Center, Georgia
The notes of Teofil Lapiński about the independence struggle of the Caucasian highlanders – a subjective narrative or an authentic source for representing history

Zaina Bashqawi, Circassian Center for Studies and Research, Jordan
The Circassian Genocide, an Epic in History Longing for an Epilogue

Larisa Tuptsokova, Circassian Cultural Center, Georgia
Circassian toponymy of the Black Sea coast

Mohd Yacoub Khawaj, Circassian Center for Studies and Research, Jordan
Circassians in Jordan, Their Efforts Against Cultural Assimilation and Preservation of language

Discussion: Konrad Zasztowt, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland

DAY 3 | WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2022

the Balowa Room, Potockich Palace, University of Warsaw

SESSION IV – 10.00 a.m. – 12.40 p.m.

Moderators: Zaina Bashqawi, Circassian Center for Studies and Research, Jordan;
Konrad Zasztowt, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland

Didem Bas Bilge, Circassian Diaspora of Turkey, Turkey
Who is more Circassian, who is less? A critical assessment of ethnic boundary markers of Circassians of Turkey; through the example of solidarity cases of Circassians of Turkey and Syria

Ishaq Mola, Former Ambassador, Jordan Establishing an International Circassian Movement, Jordan
Establishing an International Circassian Movement

Natalia Hrychorczuk, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland
Circassian diaspora in Iran

Zuhdi Janbek, Former President of Circassian Charity Association in Jordan, Jordan
Relations between Middle East and Caucasus – Past, Present and Future

Aslan Beshtoev, Chairman of the public organization Coordinating Council of Adyghe
Circassian subjectivity and its basic

Discussion: Fatima Tlis, Editor, Polygraph.info, Voice of America, United States of America

11.40 a.m. – 12.00 p.m. *Coffee break*

Adel Bashqawi, Circassian author, Jordan
Circassian Genocide Recognition Being Key Factor For Rights Restoration

Ibrahim Yagan, Head of Adyge-khasa (Qabarda), Adyge
Circassian problem: Current situation and Future

Cahit Aslan, Cukurova University, Turkey
The Journey Towards the Caucasus with Metal Horses: Motorcycle Daires

Discussion: Zaina Bashqawi, Circassian Center for Studies and Research, Jordan

12.40 p.m. – 2.30 p.m. *Lunch break*

SESSION V – 2.30 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.

at the Ball Room, Potockich Palace, University of Warsaw

Round table: *The Circassian Diaspora in United States of America and other Countries*

Moderators: Iyad Youghar, The chairman of the International Circassian Council, United States of America; Zeynel Besleney, Journal of Caucasian Studies, Turkey.

Participants: Zack Barsik, Tamara Barsik, Murad Kandor, Ali Berzeg, International Circassian Council, United States of America; Hamza Shahaltough, Jordan Association of Caucasus Circassian Friends

Closing Ceremony