

Re: Kabardian, Circassian, and Adygh

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Hi,

Here are some good starting points:

ADYGH:

Adyghs (more properly –Adyghes–) are a North–West Caucasian nation. They are close relatives of two other neighbouring nations, Abkhazians and Ubykhs.

The etymology of the word is not certain. Some claim it comes from A–Dyghe (a proto Adyghes–Abkhaz–Ubykh word?) meaning –Our Sun–, or –Our Power– or –Ours/Our people–.

Today, Adyghes living in the Adyghey (Adygheya in Russian) Federal Republic of the Russian Federation are –officially– called as Adyghes.

ADYGH LANGUAGE:

National language of Adyghes. Adyghes call their language Adyghabze; Adyghes + bze. Bze means –language– in –Adyghabze–.

Adyghabze was originated from a proto Adyghes–Abkhaz–Ubykh language about some 1000+ years ago but they are not mutually intelligible today.

KABARDIANS:

Kabardians (–Kabardey– in Adyghabze; –Kabardin– in Russian) are not a separate nation but (probably the biggest) tribe of Adyghes speaking Kabardian dialect of Adyghabze which is more or less mutually intelligible with other dialects of Adyghabze such as Besleney, Shapsugh, Abkzakh.

I dont know much about the etymology of the word –Kabardey– but it probably comes from a tribal (?) name –Kabard– because the suffix –ey– actuals means –land– in Adyghabze. Today the word Kabard+ey means both a tribe and the territory they live on.

Today, Adyghes that are living the Kabardino–Balkarian Federal Republic of the Russian Federation are –officially– named as Kabardians.

* singular: Adyghe, Kabardey

plural: Adyghe+her, Kabardey+her in Adyghabze.

CHERKESS:

A variation of the word –Circassian–.

Cherkess is used for:

1– A kind of second national name for referring to Adyghes. However, the word Cherkess/Circassian is not an –Adyghabze– word.

2– Adyghes + Abkhazians + Ubykhs

3– Adyghes + Abkhazians + Ubykhs AND even Ossetians, Chechens, Karachais, Dagistanis. (used mostly in North Caucasian Diaspora involving Adyghe diaspora)

Today, Adyghes that are living the Karachai–Cherkess Federal Republic of the Russian Federation are –officially– named as Cherkess(es).

ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD –CHERKESS–:

Several views:

Some claim it is a Turkic/Mongolian word meaning (1) cut+head [cher+kes] or (2) skillful rider.

or

A word derived from an ancient Adyghe tribe called the Kerkets

or

A Greek word referring to Adyghes probably originating from the word –Kerket–.

SO, WHY ALL THIS TROUBLE ABOUT THESE NAMES?

1– Adyghes have some strong tribal divisions.

2– These tribal divisions have been abused by the divide–and–rule policies of the Tsarist/Soviet/RF Russian rulers.

3– Artificially imposed national (!) names like Kabardian and Cherkess are used/promoted to divide, assimilate and compete with the original Adyghe identity.

4– Above mentioned political practices were/had to be adopted by the scholarly literature of Tsarist/Soviet/RF academicians.

5– Western scholars follow the above mentioned –artificial–, ethnic/linguistic classification dating back to Tsarist/Soviet times. The result is just confusion.

A QUICK NOTE ON ADYGHE HISTORY:

Adyghe, just like the Abkhazians and the Ubyks, have first appeared in the North West Caucasus, originating from a single proto Adyghe–Abkhazo–Ubykh nation.

A long history of stateless, loose/monarchless co–habitation of tribes...a long history of resistance against the invasions from several directions (Romans, Turks, Mongolians, Khazarians)...trade & cultural affairs with Greeks, Italians, Byzantines via the Black Sea...times of Adyghe paganism, then Christianity (and even a little Judaism?) and then Islam...destructive wars with the Tsarist Russia beginning roughly in late 17th century till late 19th century (Russo–Caucasian Wars)...final invasion of Adyghe and the rest the rest of North Caucasus (see Imam Shamy) around 1859–1864...forced mass exile to the Ottoman Empire and some other regions of the world...death of hundreds of thousands....today +/-700.000 Adyghe (Adyghe+Kabardian+Cherkess+Shapsugh) live in the North West Caucasus (Adyghe Fed.Rep., Kab–Bal.FR, Karac–Ch.FR, Krasnodar, Stavropol); 2–3 (?) millions in the Adyghe diaspora (mostly in Turkey; the rest Israel, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt..., USA, Europe; some went/were taken to even South America after the great exile).

KARACHAIS AND BALKARS:

Karachai and Balkars are non–Adyghe Turkic nations. (or just tiny tribes of a greater Turkish/Turkic body stretching from Central Asia to Caucasus and Anatolia.)

best regards,

Mesej Argun

H.M. Hubey wrote:

> *Nahali wrote:*

> >

> > *I am a bit confused about the classification of these three languages. In*

> > *Kenneth Katzner's book on languages, he has a section dedicated to Kabardian.*

> > *In this section, he says that the Kabardian language is composed of three*

> > *dialects: Kabardian, Circassian, and Adygh. In Ruhlen's book Kabardian and*

- > > *Adygh are listed as seperate languages. I know that Circassian is also called*
- > > *Cherkess, and that the Kabardian and Circassian languages are called*
- > > *Kabardin–Cherkess. The Circassians and the Kabardians are different people,*
- > > *but are Cherkess and Kabardian identical? I have found seperate sources on*
- > > *Adygh but never just on Cherkess.*
- >
- > *The words "cherkess" or "circassian" are used to refer to a group/nation.*
- >
- > *I don't think anyone knows what the words mean or where they come from.*
- > *In 1991 when I was there, an old Russian archaeologist claimed that the*
- > *word "cherkess" means "cut the head and throw it away". I think he was*
- > *pulling my leg. "kes" does mean "cut" in Turkic languages, and "cher" does seem to have some connection to Ottoman "Yenicheri" (new soldiers)*
- > *and possibly has some connection to "cherig" (soldier?). If I recall correctly, "cherig" shows up in old Turkic (Clauson).*
- >
- > *The people who are designated under these words call themselves "adighe".*
- > *The "adighe" people have subgroups. The person whose books you should read are Hewitt. The Adighe/Abkhaz are said to linguistically belong to*
- > *the same family. There are some Abkhaz north of the Caucasus in the*
- > *Karachay–Cherkessia republic. These got there apparently after the 14h*
- > *century and are called "Abaza".*
- >
- > *Now, there is a people called "Iazyg" (allegedly Iranian) somewhere around*
- > *the Carpathian mountains ((Pannonia) circa 200 CE. The Kabardians are not found in*
- > *their present place until very late and they were semi–nomadic. Now,*
- > *Kabars were a subtribe of the Khazars who migrated to Pannonia.*
- Malcolm
- > *has shown that Rumanians (related to Vlachs) moved to Romania starting*
- > *around 1200s. So maybe they drove the inhabitants of that region (Iazygs)*
- > *away and they bounced around (nomads) until they found an empty place to*
- > *settle. But the Alan state (allegedly Iranian) in the North Caucasus*
- > *was destroyed by Timurlane around 1390s. So this is probably the empty*

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> *space that these nomads found to settle in. It fits.*

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> *Regards, Mark*

> ^^^^...*I love humanity. It's people I can't*

stand.....^^^

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