

## ON THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE CIRCASSIAN DIASPORA (ON MATERIALS OF THE RUSSIAN CAUCASIAN STUDIES)

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### Z

Bu makale erkez diasporasının oluřunu ve mevcut durumu hakkındadır. Trkiye, Suriye ve rdn'deki erkez (Adige) diasporasının kurumsallařmasının belli bařlı ařamaları ve bu sreci belirleyen etmenler incelemeye alınmıřtır. Yazarlar Rusya Federasyonu ve dıř diasporadaki erkez (Adige) sivil rgtlerinin erkez toplumunun dilsel, etnik ve etno-politik sorunları ile tarihi anayurtlarına dnř meselelerinin zm yoludaki faaliyetlerini tahlil etmektedirler. erkez sorununun siyasallařması konusu ve bunun kavramsal temelleri arařtırılmıřtır. erkez diasporasının aędař sıkıntılara ggs gerebileceęi, ıkarlarını koruyabileceęi ve hkmet dıřı bir oyuncu olarak davranabileceęi sonucuna ulařılmıřtır. Yazarlar erkezlerin anayurtlarına dnřnn řu anda ne bunu umanların beklentilerini karřıladıęına ne de buna muhalif olanların korkularını haklı ıkardıęına dikkat ekmektedirler.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** erkez diasporası, sivil rgtler, erkez sorunu, tarihi anayurt, yurda dnř.

### ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to history of formation and present state of Circassian diaspora. The main stages of institutionalization of Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora in Turkey, Syria and Jordan are investigated and factors defining this process are brought to light. The authors analyze activity of the Circassian (Adyghe) public organizations of the Russian Federation and of foreign diaspora in solution of problems of the Circassian (Adyghe) nation in linguistic, ethnic and ethno-political spheres and problems of repatriation to the historical homeland. The problem of politicization of the Circassian problem and its conceptual basis are investigated. The conclusion is made that the Circassian diaspora is capable to resist modern challenges, to promote its interests and to act as the non-governmental actor. The authors note that at the

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present time repatriation of Circassians neither meets expectations of its supporters, nor justifies the fears of repatriation opponents.

**Keywords:** Circassian diaspora, public organizations, "Circassian problem", historical homeland, repatriation.

In the conditions of globalization and increase of scales of migration processes of diasporization become more active, and diasporas become more and more active actors of modern world politics. Several dozens of definitions of the term diaspora exist and this variety is caused by the fact that a diaspora is a subject of research of various disciplines - ethnography, ethnology, history, political science, sociology, culturology, etc.

Many scientists (Arutyunov 2000; Dyatlov 2004; Illarionova 1994; Levin 2001; Melkonyan 2001; Militarev 2002, 2003; Poloskova 1999; Popkov 1999, Tishkov 2001, 2003, Shnirelman 1999, Esman 2009, Cohen 2008, Brubaker 2009, Safran 2005, Sheffer 2003 etc.) consider different aspects of formation and functioning of ethnic minorities, displaced ethnic groups, diaspora communities.

V. A. Tishkov presents the most complete and exact analysis of "diaspora" definition: "diaspora is a culturally distinctive community formed on the basis of ideas about the common homeland and of collective ties, group solidarity and publicly expressed relation to the homeland built on this basis. If similar characteristics are absent, there is no diaspora also. In other words, the diaspora is a style of vital behavior, but neither rigid demographic nor an ethnic reality" [Tishkov, 2011, 42].

S. A. Arutyunov's statement that "the diaspora is not only and not just a state, the diaspora is a process of development from "not yet diaspora" through "actual diaspora" to "not a diaspora any more" is of great interest. [Arutyunov, 2000, 77]. Yu. V. Arutyunyan, L. M. Drobizheva and A. A. Susokolov consider that concerning "part of the ethnonation living outside the territory of its self-determination the term diaspora is more correct" [Arutyunov, Drobizheva, Susokolov 1999, 36].

Definition of diaspora which is formulated by M.A. Astvatsaturova seems rather substantial. She considers diaspora a real ethnic community and treats it as "the displaced ethnic group living far from territories of historical ethnogenesis, structured in external and internal systemic relations and which actualizes ethno-cultural self-determination". M. A. Astvatsaturova further develops the thesis about the diasporic coefficient (DC) by analogy with multinationality coefficient, and also the thesis about an ethno-cultural enclave quality of diasporas which are aimed at preservation, transfer and presentation of ethnic identity in an alien ethnic environment of the majority. M. A. Astvatsaturova considers self-organizational, purposeful collective social creativity on the basis of national and cultural self-determination to be the leading sign of the diaspora [Astvatsaturova, 29-30, 93-97, 121].

A.V. Avksentyev and V.A. Avksentyev treat a "diaspora" definition in the broad sense and consider that "diasporas are ethnic communities, not only those that are institutionally organized, but also those that were developed in the natural-historical way and are not organized into any public structures" [Avksentyev, Avksentyev, 1997, 7].

Strengthening tendencies of growing number of diasporas, their institutionalization and conversion of their economic and social potential into a political one promote transformation of some diasporas into independent ethno-political actors. Presence of a diaspora abroad can be considered as "the factor of realization of national interests providing political, economic, cultural and linguistic presence in the countries that have important geopolitical and strategic value", a factor of the bilateral relations where the diaspora is capable to serve as a "bridge". At the same time the policy of the state of accommodation in relation to a diaspora is estimated as one of important indicators of policy in relation to "the historical homeland" of the diaspora and seriously influences adoption of foreign policy decisions [Poloskova, 2002].

At present, as well as two centuries ago, the South of Russia and the North Caucasus are the sphere of geopolitical interests of a number of countries and the center of some instability. In this regard the problem of the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora which has preserved high level of ethnic solidarity, "possessing high potential of ethno-political conflictness and actively participating in global public discussion about future of this region" becomes actual for Russia [Rozanova, 2013, 187].

The analysis of a current state of Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora, study of activity of the Circassian (Adyghe) public organizations of the Russian Federation and in foreign diaspora, the problem of repatriation of Circassians (Adyghes) to the historical homeland and influence of diaspora on ethno-political processes in the region present considerable academic and practical interest.

### **Brief Historical Information**

Circassian<sup>1</sup> (Adyghe) diaspora was formed as a result of a mass exodus of the peoples of the North and Northwest Caucasus to the territory of the Ottoman Empire in the course and after the Caucasian war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for political reasons. It was caused by rejection by their leaders of active penetration of the Russian influence on the Caucasus and an active foreign policy position of Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire, and also by counteraction to strengthening of Russia in the Caucasus. As a result of this war all lands inhabited by Circassians became a part of the Russian Empire, and the Circassian population has suffered essential losses. According to

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<sup>1</sup> In the countries of Europe and Asia representatives of all nations of the North Caucasus were called Circassians. In recent years in historical literature the term Circassian is assigned to representatives of the people of the Adyghe language group (Adyghes, Circassians, Kabardins, Shapsugs).

official figures of the tsarist military authorities, the number of the deported Adyghes reached 493000. Special scientific researches (domestic, European and Turkish) estimate the number of exiles over 1.5 million people [Dzamikhov, 2005, 42; Beredzh 2012, 2000-2005; Kudaeva, 2007, 170-199]. For the Ottoman Empire that was growing decrepit and torn apart by contradictions, the Circassians (Adyghes) became a valuable source of the human capital. Circassians were settled generally in those regions of the empire where strong centrifugal forces against the central power existed, in regions with prevalence of Kurds, Arabs and on the Balkans [Kaya, 2004,223].

After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire descendants of muhajirs (the name that became common for immigrants from the Caucasus) have been dispersed through the territory of Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Serbia. Civil war in Russia has caused the second wave of emigration from Russia to foreign countries in which representatives of Circassians (Adyghes) who have emigrated to France, Germany and USA have also been involved.

After the victory of the Soviet power the process of national-territorial construction has begun on outskirts of the Russian Empire with the autochthonic population, as a result of which the peoples have acquired the right for creation of statehood in the form of the national district, the autonomous region, the autonomous and union republics. This form of statehood conditionally was based on two principles: demographic (ethnic population number) and geographical (compactness of accommodation of ethnos in a certain territory). These principles promoted creation of three Russian autonomies (subjects) in which Circassians (Adyghes) acted as title nationalities. Now it is the Adygeya Republic (the title people - Adygheys), Kabardino-Balkarian Republic (the title people - Kabardins and Balkars (the second of these two speak Turkic language) and the Karachay-Cherkess Republic (the title people – Karachays and Circassians (the first being also Turkic)<sup>2</sup>. Opinion that became widespread during the last decades that “the Soviet authorities has purposefully and “artificially” divided “a single ethnos” into three national and state formations has no convincing confirmations and is based on extrapolation into the past of modern ethno-ideological ideas.

Territorially and administratively the Circassians have been divided long ago - during the Caucasian war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and such problem (i.e. “the Circassian question”) simply did not arise during the Soviet pow-

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<sup>2</sup> During the Soviet period sub-ethnic groups of Circassians (Adyghes): Kabardins, Adygheys and Circassians acted as the separate nations each with its own territory. Therefore in 1921-1922 three national and territorial autonomies have been created: Adygey Autonomous Region, Circassian Autonomous Region and Kabardin Autonomous Region. In the territory of the Black Sea district 3.4 thousand Shapsugs (a sub-ethnic group of Adyghes) lived compactly. Shapsug national area was formed in 1924. It existed until the end of the 1930.

er", noted one of the famous Adyghe historians A.Kh. Borov [Borov, 2013, 17-18].

The Soviet state has forbidden and practically stopped personal and other contacts and ties between Circassians (Adyghe) of the North Caucasus and diaspora. Foreign Circassians were denied the right of repatriation, they could not visit the historical homeland [Dzamikhov, 2001, 6] and that promoted isolation of diaspora from the mainland of ethnos. Such isolationism led to erosion of ethnic culture, both in diaspora, and on the historical homeland. The diaspora was exposed to influence of the Arab and Turkish cultures and languages, and the mainland part of the nation was under pressure of policy of russification pursued in the USSR. Facing the danger of possible loss of ethno-cultural originality in an alien ethnic environment, the Circassian elite at the beginning of the 20th century makes rather successful attempts of creation of public charitable and cultural- educational associations. The first such organization has been created in 1908 in Istanbul – the Circassian Society of Unification and Mutual Aid (CSUMA). Its ideologists set three main objectives for the society: strengthening of traditional culture and moral and ethical values; national education of broad masses of the population; strengthening of economic positions of the diaspora. To fulfill the last task the members of diaspora were urged to develop agriculture, to arrange production, to create the enterprises founded on the joint capital [AE, 2006, 418].

In 1928 the Circassian Society on Training and Cooperation was created in Damascus. In October, 1932 the Circassian Charitable Association was organized in Amman. These organizations certainly helped to promote the crystallization and strengthening of ethno-national identity of Circassians (Adyghe) and formation of ideological and political traditions of diaspora [Chochiev, 2009, 141]. The first thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the time of institutionalization of Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora since by the opinion of the researchers one of the major signs allowing to consider this or that ethnic community to be a diaspora is the "presence in an ethnic community of certain organizational forms of existence, beginning from such form as a fellowship of countrymen, and finishing by emergence of the social, national culture and political movements" [Toshchenko, Chapykova, 1996, 36]. Process of an institutionalization of the Circassian diaspora has been disrupted with Kemalists coming to power, when Turkey adopted the policy of assimilation, which was discriminatory towards minorities. This policy has proclaimed the thesis that in Turkey all are Turks. In 1927 the law forbidding citizens of the country to talk any language except Turkish in public places has been adopted in Turkey. After disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, Syria, Palestine and Jordan fall under the mandate of Great Britain and France that made both formation and activity of societies of an ethnic orientation rather problematic. The Circassian societies of that period weren't numerous and their activities were short-term, except for the Circassian Charitable Society in Jordan. This society has been organized on

October 25, 1932 and at the first constituent assembly the following purposes and tasks were formulated:

- 1) to carry out charity actions;
- 2) to organize various events, friendship meetings for unification of Circassians;
- 3) to care for moral and physical training of youth;
- 4) to enhance friendship and mutual aid between members of the organization. [Baderkhan, 2001, Kushnir, 2013, 316].

After the end of World War II begins the process of formation of the independent Arab states in which representatives of the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora play an important role in military and political structures. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the process of an institutionalization of the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora continued.

From the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the international labor migration from the Arab countries and Turkey to countries of Western Europe – mainly to Germany, and later to the USA became more active. The descendants of muhajirs also joined in this process and that was followed by formation of diasporas in the countries of the West. After disintegration of the Soviet Union economic migration of Circassians (Adyghe) to the western countries and replenishment of foreign Adyghe diaspora at the expense of the mainland ethnos was notable.

At present time the representatives of the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora live in more than 50 countries of the world. Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Libya remain places of compact accommodation of Circassians (Adyghe). The approximate number of the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora in Turkey, according to the Turkish newspaper “Yeni Şafak” reaches 7 million people [Sali, 2004]. In Syria live about 100 thousand Circassians (Adyghe), in Jordan - 90 thousand, in Israel – more than 3, 5 thousand and in Libya – 30 thousand. In the Western countries the most numerous Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora exists in Germany – 40 thousand, in the USA – 15 thousand, in the Netherlands (Holland) – 500 persons [Zhemukhov, 2008].

Main part of the Circassian diaspora lives in modern Turkey. On the basis of the numerous Circassian cultural centers and associations a united Caucasian Society of Turkey (KAFDER) has been formed. After 10 years in Ankara the “Federation of Caucasian Societies” (KAFFED) and “Federation of Societies of the United Caucasus” were organized. Since 2009 KAFFED unites in its ranks about 65 Circassian societies (*khase*) and is a member of the International Circassian Association. According to the estimates of experts studying the Circassian diaspora in Turkey for the last 25-30 years over 100 Circassian public organizations – cultural societies, funds, committees, clubs which are included into various federations are active. 20 of them are operating in Istanbul, the majority of which are engaged in cultural and educational activities. Besides KAFFED a noticeable role is played in Turkey by the “Council of the United Caucasus” created in due time by former members of Parliament, retired military and prominent businessmen

of the Circassian origin for lobbying North Caucasian interests. The Fund of Education and Culture named in honor of Shamil financing a great number of cultural and educational actions proves to be rather active. At the beginning of 1990s, when the situation in the North Caucasus aggravated ("the Chechen crisis" and the Georgian-Abkhazian war), a Committee of solidarity with Abkhazia and Committee of support of Chechnya were created in Turkey [AE, 428].

The Circassian diaspora in modern Turkey represented by its public organizations has no uniform political platform in definition of its program of actions: some of them see the future of ethnos in return to the historical homeland; others believe that the present reality in Turkey and the Russian Federation doesn't allow a mass return to the Caucasus and therefore it is necessary to strive to achieve favorable conditions for preservation of ethnic identity in the country of accommodation; the third consider actions through the international organizations and political institutes as more effective for the solution of the Circassian problem.

Finding themselves out of their homeland, Circassians (Adyghe) have managed to adapt to life in the countries of accommodation and to create compact ethno-demographic segments. Despite all negative processes happening in political life and ideology of the countries of accommodation (Turkey and the countries of the Middle East), the Circassian diaspora was considered as a reliable support of the state everywhere and won a reputation as a loyal part of the population, capable of military and administrative service. Numerous are the facts of appointment of Adyghe to high posts in government, their election to the supreme legislative bodies of the countries of accommodation. The Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora occupies the most prominent and strong positions in Jordan since formation of the ruling (and considerably military) elite of the Jordanian kingdom happened with the assistance of the natives of diasporas [Ganich, 2007, 6], (out of which the Adyghe one was the most numerous). In the Great National Assembly of the Republic of Turkey not less than 30 members - ethnic Circassians are traditionally elected from various political parties. According to experts there are much more parliament members having the Circassian origin, but they, as well as many prominent military ranks or officials of high government institutions, don't declare their ethnic origin for career reasons. In Libya representatives of the Adyghe diaspora in 2011 were active participants of opposition and were active against Muammar Gaddafi [Zhemukhov, 2011, 3]. A certain part of Circassians, migrating to Europe, USA and other countries of the Western world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, integrated into their political culture and standards of life. But wherever the representatives of the Circassian diaspora would live they realize their ethnic and cultural unity and consider themselves a part of the whole Circassian ethnos.

### **Development of Ties of the Circassian Diaspora with the Republics of the North Caucasus in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> – Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

At the end of fifties - beginning of the sixties of the last century the relations with the former compatriots abroad become more active in the USSR. Expansion of its own information opportunities and strengthening of the influence in foreign countries was considered important for the Soviet Union. Special "Rodina" ("Homeland") association for interaction with foreign compatriots abroad was formed by the Decree of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in 1955. Originally it was the Committee for Repatriation, which was stationed in Berlin and helped the Soviet citizens forcefully deported to Germany during war of 1941-1945 and prisoners of fascist concentration camps to return back home, to their own country. In 1959 functions of Committee were extended, it became a well-known organization which supported the patriotic movement among emigrants, developed contacts with them, informed them on life in the Soviet Union. According to new tasks it was renamed the "Committee for Repatriation and Development of Cultural Ties with Compatriots Abroad". In 1963 at the initiative of a number of public organizations (All-Union Central Council of Labor Unions, Soviet Peace Defense Committee, Soviet Committee of War Veterans, Committee of the Soviet Women, Committee of the Youth Organizations of the USSR, the Unions of writers, journalists, composers, cinematography personnel, etc.) the Soviet Committee for Cultural Ties with Compatriots Abroad has been established in Moscow. In 1975 it becomes the Soviet Society for Cultural Ties with Compatriots Abroad ("Rodina" Society). In May, 1991 the Soviet Society for Cultural Ties with Compatriots Abroad has been reorganized into the Soviet Association for Ties with Compatriots. In January, 1992 it became an Association for Ties with Compatriots Abroad<sup>3</sup>.

From 1960s in the light of development of contacts of the USSR with the countries of the Middle East the question about Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora has got new sounding. Development of ties with the Circassian diaspora during this period was considered as a factor of strengthening of influence of the Soviet Union on the Arab countries. During the same period the first repatriates – separate families from Turkey, Syria and Jordan began to return to Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the Adygey Autonomous Region [Maksidova, 2011]. However, policy of the USSR which didn't support repatriation of Circassians (Adyghes) and objective difficulties which the Circassians wishing to return to the Soviet Union were having (citizenship registration, search of housing and work, etc.) did not encourage their active return to the historical homeland [Eshba, 2015,88]\*. The USSR leadership, though it didn't support repatriation, nevertheless didn't put barriers to rather reserved official contacts of the emigrants from the North Caucasus with their historical homeland –

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<sup>3</sup> It was named "Rodina" Association for Ties with the Compatriots Abroad.

with the republics of the North Caucasus. Usually these contacts developed in the sphere of culture and education.

From the second half of the 1960s the Kabardino-Balkarian office of the Soviet Committee on Cultural Ties with Compatriots Abroad ("Rodina" Society) began to work actively on establishment and further development of interaction with the Circassian Charitable Societies (CCS) of Syria and Jordan in the sphere of culture and education. It should be noted that in the cultural sphere an important role was played by "Kabardinka" folk dance ensemble. Its performances during tours to Syria, Jordan and other countries where Circassian diasporas existed, became an important event for Circassians (Adyghe) and enhanced their communication with the lost Homeland. In 1981-1985 the King of Jordan Hussein has personally granted to "Kabardinka" ensemble high state awards – the Order of Independence of the first degree and the Star of Jordan of the first degree.

The educational policy of the USSR for the countries of the Middle East has provided to representatives of the Circassian (Adyghe) youth an opportunity to be trained in the Soviet higher education institutions, including the Kabardino-Balkarian State University.

In the second half of the 1980s, during *perestroika* movement and democratization in the USSR opportunities appeared for closer contacts of the mainland population of the Circassian (Adyghe) ethnos with foreign diaspora. The links broken more than a century ago were reestablished.

Clan family gatherings gained popularity in Kabardino-Balkaria in the 1980s [Akkiyeva, 208,163]. Representatives of different Circassian (Adyghe) families began to come to these meetings from foreign countries and that gave a powerful spur to revival of ethnicity and patrimonial ties in diaspora. Trips of relatives from Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygeya and Karachay-Circassia to relatives living in Turkey, Syria, and Jordan became possible.

The number of representatives of diaspora, wishing to study in higher education institutions of Nalchik grew slowly, but steadily. If in 1986 113 students were studying in two higher education institutions of Kabardino-Balkaria from the Circassian charitable societies of Syria and Jordan on quotas of "Rodina" Society, by 1989 their number has increased up to 130 people (118 – in Kabardino-Balkarian State University and 12 – in Kabardino-Balkarian Agriculture Melioration Institute [Maksidova, 2008].

In the second half of the 1980s thousands of the Kabardin language textbooks published in Nalchik were sent to the Circassian communities of Turkey, Syria and Jordan. Besides the textbooks, literature in the native language was sent to the Circassian charitable societies: literary magazines "Oshkhamakho", "Nur", newspapers and works of fiction, audio and video records. So, in 1989 300 books, 20 audio cassettes with records of folk melodies and songs, several videotapes with films about our republic and national art have been sent to Syria. Special help was rendered in manufacture of national suits, hats and footwear for folk ensemble of the Circassian Charitable Society (CCS) in Damascus. Tourist trips of Circassians (Ady-

ghes) from diaspora to the USSR and the Soviet Circassians (Adyghes) to Turkey, Syria, etc. have become more frequent. Official visits of foreign Circassians to Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygeya and Karachay-Circassia became possible. Delegations from CCS of Syria and Jordan came to Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, both through "Rodina" society and through "Intourist" and "Sputnik" travel agencies. These visits became more active in the second half of the 1980<sup>th</sup>. In 1985 the delegation from the Circassian Charitable Societies of Syria and Jordan have arrived; in 1986 – delegations from the Circassian Charitable Society of Syria (3 persons) and from CCS of Jordan (5 persons); in 1987 - delegation from CCS of Syria (3 persons); in 1989 - delegation of CCS of Jordan and a delegation of CCS of Syria consisting of 5 persons each headed by the chairman of this society doctor Sharafuddin Abaza [Neflyasheva, 2013].

The standard cultural program comprising meetings with high officials of the republic (usually at the level of ministers), visits to the museums, to the Palace of pioneers and pupils, cultural institutions, trips to villages and cities of the republic, meetings with actors of local theaters, scientists, composers, writers and poets was usually offered to these delegations.

Also return visits of members of "Rodina" to Syria and Jordan were practiced; visitors from the USSR met the Circassians that worked and lived in the capitals of Syria and Jordan –Damascus and Amman and in other cities where Circassians Adyghes) compactly abided. In Jordan it were the cities of Jerash, Wadi-es-Seer, Suwailih and Naour, and in Syria – Homs.

In 1988 the first scientific field expedition from Kabardino-Balkaria to Syria and Jordan has been organized through the Kabardino-Balkarian office of society "Rodina". In the course of this expedition scientists visited settlements where Circassians dwelled compactly and gathered unique material on history, ethnography, linguistics and folklore. In 1993 the second complex scientific expedition to Turkey and Syria has been organized. The materials published on the results of this expedition present a scientific interest till present time. According to the Turkish researcher from the Istanbul university Bilgi Kaya Ayhan, development of ties between diaspora and the mainland part of the Circassian (Adyghe) ethnos have awakened ethnic consciousness in diaspora, restored the lost homeland and brought to memory the "magnificent" past. The regular connections with the homeland, thanks to passenger flights Istanbul-Krasnodar and Istanbul-Nalchik, and also the regular ferry service between Trabzon and Sochi seaports promote development of close ties of diaspora with the homeland. Television and radio broadcasting in the Circassian language which became available to foreign Circassians helped to strengthen the Circassian identity in diaspora [Brecher, J. et al., 1993].

### **Politicization of the Circassian Issue**

The beginning of the 1990<sup>s</sup> is characterized by politicization of the purposes and tasks of Circassians (Adyghes), both in the republics of the North

Caucasus and in diaspora. This process was followed by formation of a diasporal network and activation of the non-governmental social and political organizations (NPO). Initiated by the Circassian Cultural Center in Ankara, from 21<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of October the Week of North Caucasian culture was held which has become some kind of assembly of representatives of the Circassian communities. Delegations from Jordan, Syria, Egypt, the USA, Germany, Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygeya, as well as the representatives of the North Caucasian cultural centers of a number of cities of Turkey have taken part in its work [Kushkhabiev, 1997, 163]. Questions of muhajirism i.e. the mass eviction of Circassians (Adyghe) to the Ottoman Empire were discussed at this meeting; the difficulties existing in studying of the native languages among foreign Circassians despite the help which was provided to diaspora, in particular from Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Circassia and Adygeya were noted. The greatest interest of all the audience was attracted by repatriation problem, which was discussed very sharply. A special declaration on the results of the assembly was elaborated, in which the desire to acquaint the peoples of the world with the problem of the Circassian diaspora, about the aspiration to extend the contacts of diaspora with the historical homeland, and of desire of a certain part of diaspora to return to the homeland - the North Caucasus was stated. At the same time no concrete decisions have been adopted. This "meeting had character of acquaintance between delegations from larger Circassian communities and definition of the problems important for all diaspora" [Kushkhabiyev, 2004, 163]. On May 4-5, 1990 in the village of Den-Alerdnik (Holland) a conference of the foreign Circassian organizations has been held in which representatives of society "Rodina" from Kabardino-Balkaria and Adygeya have taken part. A total of 68 delegates were present. The possibility of creation of the united Circassian organization for coordination of all Circassian communities of the world was discussed. The capital of Kabardino-Balkaria - the city of Nalchik has been chosen as a site of such unification conference.

After this conference the process of organizational formation of the international Adyghe movement begins. Lower level organizations were being formed under the uniform name "*Adyghe Khase*". On October 20, 1990 in Nalchik the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of the Kabardin public organization "*Adyghe Khase*" has taken place. It has been formed on the basis of the Kabardin cultural society "Ashamaz" which has been established earlier by representatives of the creative Circassian (Adyghe) intellectuals of the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. In the program of the organization it has been underlined that interests of the organization are beyond the frames of Kabardino-Balkarian problems and have the all-Adyghe character; it was also noted that the "Khase, along with the Similar Organizations of Adygheys, Circassians, Abazins and the Black Sea Shapsugs, is a defender of national interests of Adyghe" [Akkiyeva, 2002, 246].

On May 19-20, 1991 to Nalchik the 1<sup>st</sup> congress of all Circassian societies was held. Delegations from the Circassians living abroad - Turkey and

the Middle East (Syria, Jordan and Israel), Europe (Germany, Holland and France), the USA, and also delegates of public organizations and government delegations of Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Circassia, Adygeya, Shapsugiya<sup>4</sup>, Abkhazia participated in the Congress. The congress has created the World Circassian Association that was later renamed the International Circassian Association (ICA). The Charter of ICA has been adopted. It was registered in the USSR Ministry of Justice in September, 1991, and later, in 1993 in the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation which was headed at that period by Yu.Kh. Kalmykov - the president of ICA. According to this statutory act the supreme body of ICA was a Congress convoked once in three years. This Charter stated that the Congress elects the President of ICA, the Executive Committee and also forms the ICA Council which coordinate the work of all Circassian societies – founders of ICA [Dzamikhov, 2012, 112-113].

ICA was created for the purpose of unification of the Circassian (Adyghe) people in all countries of accommodation. According to the recommendation of ICA, in all countries, in all regions of the Russian Federation where Circassians (Adyghe) live, in all settlements with the compact Adyghe population *Khases* (societies or cultural centers) must be active; within every *Khase* committees on preservation and revival of the Circassian language, history, cultural ties, etc. should be working.

One of important direction of ICA activities was the work on an objective assessment of character and consequences of the Caucasian war, and also recognition and condemnation of the genocide of Circassians which was carried out by tsarist Russia. In 1994 the ICA becomes the member of the Unrepresented Nations and People Organization (UNPO) which works under patronage of the UN and unites more than 50 nations. In July, 1997 in the city of Tartu on the 5<sup>th</sup> General assembly of UNPO the “Resolution on position of the Circassian people” has been adopted with the assistance of ICA delegation in which in an imperative form political goals of the Circassian movement were declared. Subsequently UNPO has addressed the Government of the Russian Federation and all international community with the offer to assist Circassians in realization of their ethnic rights. In 1998 the Circassian question has been included in the working agenda of various commissions of the UN. On October 11, 2006 twenty Circassian organizations from nine countries of the world have appealed to European Parliament with the request for recognition of genocide of Circassians. From that time on in European Parliament "the Circassian days" are held with the participation of the Circassian diaspora [Rozanova, 193].

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<sup>4</sup> Shapsugiya – the traditional name of the historical area on the coast of the Black Sea (now - Lazarevsky District of Krasnodar Territory). In 1924 in this territory the Shapsug national area has been formed, later it has been renamed the Shapsug area and abolished in 1945. The Shapsug people public organization "Khase" publishes "The Shapsugiya" newspaper.

At different periods Executive committee of ICA addressed leaders of Russian Federation, heads of Kabardino-Balkarian Republic and Republic of Adygeya concerning recognition of genocide of Circassians. ICA, working in close cooperation with "*Adyghe Khase*" of KBR and RA, have achieved the adoption of special decree "About condemnation of genocide of Adyghes (Circassians) in the years of the Russian-Caucasian War" by legislative bodies of these republics. Numerous statements have been published by ICA - about the Memory Day in Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Circassia and Adygeya, about the 130<sup>th</sup>, the 145<sup>th</sup> and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the end of the Caucasian war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Delegates of the different ICA Congresses appealed number of times to the heads of various federal governmental bodies for deliberation and adoption of a Law on overcoming of consequences of the Caucasian war in respect to the Circassians (Adyghes) and for recognitions of their status of the exiled nation.

From the first day of its existence ICA works on one of the most important and difficult problems - a repatriation problem. For most of Adyghes the idea of repatriation — unification of the nation in the historical homeland is an attractive national idea [Dzamikhov, 2012, 117]. ICA doesn't set the purpose to return all Adyghes to the historical homeland at once. Repatriation is the difficult and long process demanding awareness of its necessity not only by leaders and separate groups of the population. "It needs favorable historical conditions and the coordinated efforts of all interested parties. In modern conditions ICA sets a task to render assistance to those who have decided to return to the homeland of the ancestors for permanent accommodation; to help them to adapt to new conditions" [Maksidova, 2011]. For this very purpose in the Republic of Adygeya the Law "About Repatriates" has been adopted in cooperation with ICA [Kalmykova, 2008].

Return of compatriots from Kosovo to the Republic of Adygeya became a major social and political event in the Russian Federation and for all Circassians (Adyghes). After the beginning of an armed conflict in former Yugoslavia ICA repeatedly raised a question about the fate of Kosovo Circassians at meetings of the Organization of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples (OUNP). The positive resolution on this problem has been adopted also by Human Rights Committee in the UN. The Government of the Russian Federation has adopted the resolution of July 3, 1998. "About urgent measures of the state support of resettlement of Adyghes (Circassians) from the Autonomous Province of Kosovo (Federal Republic Yugoslavia) to the Republic of Adygeya". On August 1, 1998 174 Circassians have come back to the Russian Caucasus. The positive solution of this problem had a great social resonance and political importance in the Circassian world and in the international community. It has demonstrated strengthening of federalism and democracy in the Russian state in 1990<sup>s</sup> having solved the main problem of compatriots – their return to the historical homeland.

The present stage of activity of ICA reflects strengthening of the Russian statehood at the beginning of the 2000<sup>s</sup>, a sharp change in tendencies

of ethno-political development in the North Caucasus and a positive turn in the position of ethnic minorities in the Republic of Turkey where according to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey about 6 million Circassians abide. All this has allowed bringing activity of ICA to a new level, to maintain systematic work of the Executive committee and of the Council with the Circassian associations (founders of Association) in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Europe and the USA, concentrating mainly on the solution of actual social, political and cultural problems of ethnos in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If we wish to characterize their living conditions at this stage, Circassians (Adyghes) live in the conditions of globalization, as well as all the rest of the world. Globalization promotes, on one hand, rapprochement of countries and opening of borders. Due to more activity and mobility, the ability to maintain closer ties between different parts of the diaspora wherever they live increases. On the other hand, if earlier there were islands of compact accommodation of compatriots in diaspora, now they are washed away under the influence of the urbanization and globalization. Thereby the rate of dispersal of the Circassian diaspora in the world doesn't decrease, but increase, on the contrary.

Therefore special attention is paid by ICA to a question of culture of Circassians (Adyghes), both in the historical homeland, and in diaspora. In the field of culture several main objectives are distinguished: maintenance of cultural heritage and identity of descendants of muhajirs, preservation and development of language by unification Circassian and Adyghe (Adygey) languages. Now there are two literary languages: Kabardino-Circassian and Adygey. For the first time the question about uniform Circassian (Adyghe) language has been raised in 1993 at the conference devoted to results of the Caucasian war. This question was considered in more details at Nalchik conference in 1999, when the program of research works on development and rapprochement of the Adyghe literary languages has been elaborated. In the resolution of conference the following items were stated:

1) to plan (along with unification of alphabetic and spelling systems of the Adyghe languages) other measures such as a creation of a textbook on pronouncing and lexical compliances in literary Adyghe languages;

2) to intensify researches on development of the general principles of lexical borrowings and adaptation of a huge layer of the Russian and international terminological lexicon in the Adyghe written languages;

3) to conduct scientific researches on lexical interaction of the Adyghe languages; in this process many Adygey words which are absent in the Kabardino-Circassian language or vice versa can become all-Adyghe, i.e. may supplement to all-Adyghe lexical fund;

4) to conduct the researches directed to preserve the main merits and traditional language features of the Adyghe ethnos;

5) to work out measures for obligatory language training in the schools;

6) to develop measures for standardization of alphabets, spelling, etc. for rapprochement of the Adyghe languages in the context of broader approach to historical prospects of development of the Adyghe ethnoses.

The program provides that the state support has to be rendered at the level of three republics in which the Adyghe people act as a title nation (Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Circassia, and Adygeya) [Akkiyeva, 2002, 168]. The thesis about creation of uniform Circassian (Adyghe) language has been stated in the final resolution of the 10<sup>th</sup> congress of ICA which took place on September 19-21, 2015 in Nalchik. In the report of the UNESCO expert group for 2010 the Circassian language has been included into the group of endangered languages. This fact has caused a discussion among the creative and humanitarian Adyghe intellectuals of Kabardino-Balkaria about ways of rescue the Circassian (Adyghe) language and about consolidation of efforts on development of mechanisms of creation of uniform Circassian (Adyghe) language. Viability of languages was defined in materials of the UNESCO expert group basing on several criteria<sup>5</sup> by which Adyghe language was considered to be in the zone of risk of disappearance.

The geography of settling is considered to be one of the most important factors of preservation of language: Circassians (Adyghe) in the Russian Federation are divided within three federal subjects, while their foreign diaspora is presented in more than 50 countries. By estimates of the head of Federation of the Circassian Associations (Çerkes Dernekleri Federasyonu ÇERKES-FED) Nusret Baş only 5% of the Turkish Circassians know their native language.

The philologists and ethnologists dealing with issues of foreign Adyghe diaspora note that the senior generation knows Adyghe (Circassian) language to some extent, but the youth actually doesn't speak the language. The language policy in Turkey was liberalized during recent years, and that inspires certain hopes for improvement of the state of the native language in the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora. The Turkish government has adopted the "Living Languages and Dialects" program within which it is authorized to teach at schools native language for two hours every week beginning from 2012. The association of the Adyghe (Circassian) language<sup>6</sup> (Adige Dil Derneği, ADDER) in Turkey has submitted the project of conversion of the Adyghe (Circassian) alphabet into Latin lettering. Proving rationality of this

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<sup>5</sup> The endangerment assessment for this or that language is defined by nine criteria: total number of native speakers, a share of number of native speakers in the total number of the population, transfer of language from generation to generation, availability of textbooks and other materials for studying of language and acquisition of skills of literacy, the relation of members of a community to the native language, area of the use of language, use of language in the new fields of the mass media, the type and quality of documentation, the state policy concerning this language, including its official status and usage. (<http://www.unesco.org/new/ru/culture/themes/endangered-languages/language-vitality>).

<sup>6</sup> The term Adyghe language is understood in diaspora as Adyghe and Kabardin-Circassian languages and some dialects of Adyghe language.

choice by orientation on the Turkish language-speaking Adyghe and need of integration into the world community, the head of Association Yilmaz Dönmez has noted that literature which is received from the Russian Federation is printed in Cyrillics. In this regard organizers have offered a special transliteration program of this literature from Cyrillic lettering to Latin and back – "ChEVIRMATIK" [Tsabenko, 2014, 78-79]. In recent years ICA finances teaching of the Adyghe (Circassian) language in the diaspora and pays wages to the teachers from KBR and RA at schools of Turkey for teaching the native language.<sup>7</sup> Attempt of creation of uniform Adyghe (Circassian) language, and also activity of ICA, encouraging teaching of the native language in diaspora, have led to domination of the Adyghe language in the North Caucasian diaspora. Last 15 years the Circassian world celebrates March 14 as the Day of the Adyghe (Circassian) language and writing. This holiday has been established in 2000 in honor of publication on March 14, 1853 of the first "ABC-book of the Circassian language" compiled by the Adyghe educator Umar Bersey on the Arab graphic basis in the city of Tiflis.

Representatives of the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora are interested in events happening in the North Caucasus and Russia, in general. In October of 2006 representatives of the Adyghe (Circassian) diaspora from Jordan and Syria have taken active part in the II World Congress of Compatriots of Russia which was held in St. Petersburg. The Circassian public organizations (including foreign ones) repeatedly appealed to government institutions of the Russian Federation about inclusion of descendants of muhajirs into the list of those compatriots abroad mentioned in the Decree of the Russian President No. 637 of June 22, 2006 "About measures for rendering assistance to voluntary resettlement of the compatriots living abroad to the Russian Federation". Representatives of the Circassian diaspora have expressed positive attitude to this Decree, considering it as the act of restoration of historical justice in relation to the Circassians, who have been evicted beyond the limits of their Homeland as a result of the Caucasian war more than 150 years ago.

Overwhelming part of the Circassian diaspora is interested mostly in the moral aspect of a question – existence of a possibility of resettlement as the fact of historical justice. For many of them the aspiration to live and work in the Russian Federation is actually a form of repatriation; they have lawful sources of existence, and the majority possesses the professions and qualification which are of interest to the Russian state. Saying shortly "... it becomes clear now that interrelation of diaspora and an ethnic kernel, the degree of mutual determinancy of the evolutionary processes happening

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<sup>7</sup> Teaching the Adyghe language is conducted by the textbooks published in KBR or in RA in Cyrillic lettering. If the teacher comes from RA, he teaches Adygey language, if from KBR – the pupils will study Kabardin-Circassian. Modern Adygey and Kabardin-Circassian languages have differences in the phonetic and lexical plan that present certain difficulties for development of a uniform language.

inside them gain qualitatively new character, different from quite recent one" [Ulakov, Tolgurov, 2003, 45]. Members of the Circassian diaspora actively participate in scientific conferences, act as initiators of researches on history of Circassians (Adyghe) and the Caucasian war of the 19th century, participate in mourning actions on May 21 in KBR and other republics of compact accommodation of the Circassians devoted to the end of the Caucasian war of the 19th century and exodus of Adyghe.<sup>8</sup>

Establishment of stable relations of diaspora and the republics in which Circassians (Adyghe) abide, new opportunities to visit the historical homeland became a powerful factor for actualization of ethnic identity of Circassians in diaspora. According to one of authors of publication "the ideas of the historical homeland in the Caucasus transferred in diaspora from one generation to the other, love for the native fatherland and aspiration to return home at the slightest opportunity - all this has gradually developed as the national Circassian idea uniting the Adyghe ethnic groups in the countries of accommodation" [Dzamikhov, 2011,5-6].

The unity of the Circassian (Adyghe) movement has been broken prior to the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games and actualization of "the Circassian question" on the international scene.

The year when the Games were held has coincided with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of completion of the Caucasian war of the 19th century, and the Olympic village has been located on places of mass burials of Circassians (Adyghe) who have perished in fight for independence during Caucasian war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The leaders of Adygeya, Karachay-Circassia, Kabardino-Balkaria and majority of population of these republics have supported holding the Winter Olympic Games of 2014 in Sochi. But some Circassian groups, united in "Circassian movement "NO SOCHI"<sup>9</sup> have positioned themselves as the spokesmen of will of the Circassian people and have opposed holding the Olympic Games - 2014 on the land of Adyghe. They have organized "anti-Olympic" actions in Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Israel, the USA, including those during the international sports competitions in order to appear under the spotlights of the international mass media [Rozanova, 197]. This movement hasn't exerted serious impact on the Circassian diaspora, and its activity after the end of the 2014 Winter Olympics has decreased. Researchers mark out that initiation and excessive politicization of "the Circassian question" were undertaken by the hostile forces outside the Russian Federation [Broydo, 2011].

The problem of repatriation of Circassians (Adyghe) to the historical homeland remains one of components of "the Circassian question" and the major problem connected with the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora now. The other main problem of legalization of the Circassian repatriates is the com-

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<sup>8</sup> 21st of May was officially named a mourning day and a holiday in the three republics of RF, where Adyghe are the title nations (Adygeya, Karachay-Circassia and Kabardino-Balkaria).

<sup>9</sup> This movement was organized by USA Circassian communities and organizations.

plex procedure of paperwork, necessary for receiving residence permit or the Russian citizenship. The existing Russian legislation demands that the repatriate must live uninterruptedly within the territory of KBR, KCR or the Republic of Adygeya for 1, 3 or 5 years according to some specifications. Search of housing or work becomes problematic for the repatriates in the conditions of a difficult economic situation in Russia in general.

All this is further complicated by the fact that the vast majority of them do not speak Russian language, without which it is difficult to fit into the Russian daily life.

"The Arab spring" and events in the Arab countries, especially the beginning of military operations in Syria in March, 2011 made repatriation problem even more acute. Support of the Circassian diaspora of Syria by Governmental authorities of the Russian Federation – by the Federation Council - and by the leaders of KBR and RA promoted mitigation of position of a number of the Circassian public organizations of the Russian Federation and foreign diaspora in the "Circassian question" [Kushkhabiyev, 2013,211]. The authorities of Kabardino-Balkaria have adopted a number of legal acts declaring and regulating repatriation of foreign compatriots. However this activity of the KBR authorities was insufficiently effective due to the absence of the federal law regulating simplified procedure of repatriation of foreign compatriots to KBR. Granting citizenship of the Russian Federation to Circassian repatriates still continues to be carried out on the basis of the existing general regulations of the Russian Federation, same as to other foreign citizens, without any facilitating rules. Since the beginning of military operations in Syria such public organizations as ICA, "Peryt" (in 2014 this organization has been dissolved), Coordination council of the Adyghe public associations of KBR were engaged in acceptance and accommodation of Syrian refugees.<sup>10</sup> The leadership of KBR has also undertaken some measures for support to repatriates in the course of adaptation. Since the beginning of the conflict 1200 people arrived to Kabardino-Balkaria, 800 – to RA and KCR [Kapaeva]. About 90 houses were acquired for immigrants at the expense of businessmen and with the help of private donations of population of the republic. Fears about existence of threat of penetration of supporters of ISIL (the terrorist organization forbidden in the Russian Federation) to the territory of the Russian Federation have aggravated a problem of reception of the Syrian Circassians in mentioned republics. The Head of KBR Yu. A. Kokov said in his speech, that "it is necessary to remember that under the guise of refugees some combatants of the international terrorist organizations may get into our country with evil purposes. We need a set of special measures of preventive reaction" [Kokov]. Now in KBR there are more than 1000 Circassian repatriates from Syria; about 100 students - repatriates from Syria are trained at the Kabardino-Balkarian State University n.a. H. M. Berbekov on the budgetary basis

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<sup>10</sup> The appeal of the Coordination Committee: [//http://intercircass.org](http://intercircass.org).

(i.e. free of charge). Children of repatriates are trained at school No. 8 in Nalchik and some other schools. The prevailing part of Circassian repatriates get jobs in retail trade, light industry and construction. Representatives of foreign Adyghe diaspora, including repatriates establish in KBR enterprises for production of textiles and cardboard, they are well presented in the sphere of public catering. Many of them work in educational and scientific institutions, tourist firms, etc. Among the factors facilitating the process of social-economic, cultural and psychological adaptation of Circassian repatriates in KBR the following should be noted: absence of segregation, high level of ethnic self-consciousness of considerable part of repatriates; self-perception of repatriates as being not immigrants but a part of the Circassian (Adyghe) ethnos; corporatism of Circassian repatriates developed in the conditions of living in a diaspora, etc. [Kushkhabiyev, 2013, 231]. The Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict rises hope in the Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora that the situation in Syria will shortly improve and the flow of refugees from Syria will decrease. Deterioration of relations between Russia and Turkey that happened in the fall of 2015 after the Turkish Air Force has shot down the Russian plane can interrupt the communication of the Russian Circassians (Adyghe) with the diaspora in Turkey which actively developed the last two decades. In this regard the Chairman of KAFFED (public organization of descendants of the muhajirs living in Turkey) Yasar Aslankaya and one of the board members visited Embassy of Russia and have expressed condolences and solidarity with the Russian Federation immediately after the incident.<sup>11</sup> 100 students and post-graduate students from Turkey not only Circassians, but also representatives of other people of the Caucasus - Abkhazians, Abazins, etc.) are trained in higher education institutions of Kabardino-Balkaria – the North Caucasian Institute of Arts, Kabardino-Balkarian State University n.a. H.M. Berbekov, Kabardino-Balkarian State Agrarian University n.a. V. M. Kokov. They continue their training, and no actions of discriminative character were undertaken against them in the republic. Recently in KBR several cases of violations of the migratory legislation of Russia by the Turkish citizens were registered, that resulted in refusal of issue or cancellation of the previously issued temporary permissions or residence permits [Maratova].

### **Conclusion**

For the sesquicentennial period the Adyghe (Circassian) diaspora became an independent ethno-political actor taking a certain part in historical, cultural, social and political development of North Caucasus region in general, and the republics in which Circassians (Adyghe) live, in particular. The Circassian (Adyghe) diaspora is numerous, well organized and undertakes active actions for advancing its interests. Now two wings exist in the Circassian (Adyghe) movement: a moderate one and a radical wing. Moderate

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<sup>11</sup> KAFFED Meets with the Russian Ambassador//<http://kaffed.org> (16.12.2015).

positions are expressed by public organizations of the mainland and the Circassian public associations of Turkey (KAFFED), cultural and charitable associations – members of the International Circassian Association – *khase* of Syria, Jordan, Israel, Germany, etc. Radical positions are the positions of diasporal part, getting support from the West, first of all from the USA. So far no expectations of either supporters of repatriation of Adyghes to the North Caucasus, neither of the opponents of repatriation who are afraid that repatriation will lead to violation of ethnic structure of RA, KBR, KCR have come true. At the same time we will note that opinions on destructive influence of diaspora on situation in North Caucasus, actively expressed recently, have no real confirmation.

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**Abbreviations**

KBR – Kabardino-Balkarian Republic

RA – Republic of Adygeya

KCR-Karachay-Circassian Republic

KBSU Kabardino-Balkarian State University

KBAMI – Kabardino-Balkarian Agriculture Melioration Institute

SSU – Stavropol State University

NCAPS – North Caucasian Academy of Public Service

KBSC RAS – Kabardino-Balkarian scientific center of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

NOIHSR - North Ossetian Institute of Humanitarian and Social Researches

AE – Adyghe (Circassian) Encyclopedia