

**The First ‘Circassian Exodus’ to the Ottoman Empire
(1858-1867), and the Ottoman Response, Based on the
Accounts of Contemporary British Observers.**

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Abstract

This is a preliminary analysis of the impact of the first Circassian exodus on Ottoman society, assessing the Ottoman response to an unexpected refugee crisis, between 1858 and 1867. It is based primarily on the contemporary accounts of British observers, including consuls, journalists, and the correspondence of other eye-witnesses sent to the Foreign Office or the British Press. The analysis concentrates on the initial landings of the Circassian refugees in Ottoman Black Sea ports and the effects that their presence had on the localities that received them, and provides details of how local authorities coped. It highlights lesser told stories of this already under-researched topic, such as the individual philanthropic and pragmatic initiatives inspired by the crisis. It widens the scope of the subject to consider earlier migrations that have not so far been accorded much attention. After a brief account of the process of migration, it focuses on the conditions of the refugees, the towns and the encampments that accommodated them rather than on the later resettlement period that historians often confine themselves to. It raises questions about the inconsistencies of existing research, and uses the primary accounts of British observers to suggest a clearer picture of events.

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Introduction

The period dating from the late-1850s to the end of the 1860s, following the gradual subjugation of their lands by the Russian Army, saw a preliminary large-scale migration of refugees from the Circassian territories into the Ottoman Empire. Observers at the time named it the ‘Circassian Exodus’ due to its size and impact. This study will concentrate on the initial arrivals of these refugees in the Ottoman Black Sea ports, in so doing assessing the Ottoman experience of, and response to, this unexpected influx, with a particular reference to contemporary British sources and observations.

While some will use it more specifically, the term ‘Circassian’ has been used here in a semi-general sense to identify the indigenous peoples of the north-western Caucasus who inhabited the coastal regions of the north-eastern Black Sea littoral and the inland neighbouring territories, including the Adyghe¹, Abkhazian, and Ubykh tribes because of their social, political, geographic and linguistic commonalities with each other² (see Map I). It should be noted, however, that these regions spanning from the River Kuban in the

¹ According to Amjad Jaimoukha, the Adyghe nation was itself something of an umbrella grouping for a number of different tribes, which included the Kabardians and Beslanay in the East, and in the West the Abadzekh/Abzakh, Shapsugh, Bzhedugh, Nartkhvaj, Kemirgoi, and Hatuqwey (c.f. Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook*, p.19.) Likewise, the Ubykhs and Abkhazians also broke down into different tribes. The Abazas were another tribe caught up in the migrations, often associated with the Abkhazians. I have listed these tribes because they do appear in some of the sources, along with a few others that fall into these umbrella nations.

² Not only were all of these tribes inhabitants of the Black Sea coastal regions of the north-western Caucasus, but by the mid-nineteenth century the Ubykhs and the Abazas, according to Jaimoukha, had become well integrated with the Adyghe (ibid, p.26). Another reason for grouping these peoples together is that the Adyghe, Ubykhs, and Abkhazians had formed a political alliance by 1861 with a view to uniting against the Russians, and in order to negotiate terms of submission, and they ultimately migrated together for the most part. Including the Abkhazians, moreover, is useful in the way of a comparison as, by the time of their final migrations slightly later on in 1866-7, there is some evidence of the Ottomans having been better prepared to receive them.

North to the River Ingur in the South, were the homelands of numerous tribes and nations, which, while sources have generally lumped them together under the umbrella identity of 'Circassian', often differed from one another linguistically, culturally, and ethnically. Some sources have even used the term to refer to all the peoples of the entire northern Caucasus region – and it appears that Ottoman accounts could often be guilty of generalising in this way. However, even in the more generalised sense, the information gleaned from the various sources is still valuable to this study as most of the refugees of the northern Caucasus arriving in the Ottoman lands, regardless of their specific tribal origin, will have had a common experience. Where I have been able to differentiate and to be more specific, for example because a source has singled out a particular people, I have tried to do so. It is perhaps otherwise sufficient to note that the Circassians emigrating to the Ottoman territories were by no means a homogenous group.

While individual families from the Circassian territories had been leaving for the Ottoman Empire for many decades, the period of the latter half of the nineteenth century in particular saw intensified movement due to the increasing successes of Russian imperial expansion into the Northern Caucasus and neighbouring regions. The first exodus, which is the focus of this study, followed the Crimean War, and continued in fits and starts into the late-1860s, if not well into the 1870s. A second intense wave occurred following the 1877-8 Russo-Turkish War, along with mass-migration from the former Balkan territories, and another flight occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century and then again at the beginning of the twentieth century. These all form part of the wider

issue of Ottoman population movement and change that afflicted the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The rationale for looking at contemporary British accounts of this subject is that much of the narrative that we have about the conditions of the refugees, and of the port towns where they disembarked, comes from the British Consulate at the Ottoman Black Sea port of Trabzon. Along with Samsun, it was a major trading point for the British, and both of the consuls stationed there during this period kept a close eye on the state of affairs in both localities. The consuls overseeing the Black Sea ports in Ottoman Europe like Varna, Küstendji (Constanța), and Burgas, for whatever reasons, did not keep such prolific records on events surrounding the Circassian landings in these regions. However, some eye-witness accounts were published in the British Press at the time, as well as some letters from another port at Ineboli in Anatolia, and so many of the gaps can be filled in by looking at these testimonies.

The reliability of the reports would seem to depend very much on the personality, experience, and commitment of the individual consuls, but these British consular reports are valuable for studying events such as the Circassian refugee crisis because they provide us observations on local conditions, often placing them in their wider contexts. Estimates on statistics were probably not always reliable, but they do nevertheless give an idea of the scale of the crisis as observed by people on the ground, at the time.

A similar tale can be told with the British Press, although *The Times* correspondent in Constantinople – the source of most of the coverage used unless otherwise specified – does provide us with eye-witness information, and he is especially useful as he travelled to various different areas and did not simply rely on cribbing consular despatches. The added value of the Press is that it provided a platform for independent eye-witness accounts.

Ultimately, only looking at a limited number of British archival documents will inevitably give a slanted view of things, but I have tried where possible to avoid placing too much emphasis on those accounts which seemed to show clear bias one way or the other, and have aimed to use the materials only to gain a better idea of the practical situation on the ground, ignoring any political asides or personal opinions unless they proved interesting in themselves. These sources may nevertheless help to provide this topic with another angle on what happened, and at the very least are valuable as first-hand accounts. (A methodology for how I used the materials is provided in Appendix IV.)

In terms of secondary sources, I have looked at those materials I was able to gain access to in English and in French. Although probably not an exhaustive selection, problems can nevertheless be observed with the materials studied. There are a number of contradictions concerning the basic ‘facts’ that can be noted between different commentators, for example over the linguistic and agricultural capabilities of the Circassian refugees. Furthermore, Marc Pinson, for example, in his article on Circassians in Rumili has tended

to focus almost entirely on Russian sources³, and on the other hand Kemal Karpat and Justin McCarthy have focused on Ottoman and British sources. These sometimes polarised versions of events will inevitably lead to contradictions.

Generally, however, the main problem with all of these sources is that this is an understudied topic that is in need of a fresh injection of research in order to iron out these apparent inconsistencies. Most research so far has been done in passing while looking at other broader issues like demographic change or resettlement policy, with the earlier stages of the problem left neglected. There is very little that has been written about the social history of the Black Sea ports during this refugee crisis. This earlier period has, apart from some effort by Justin McCarthy, virtually been ignored.

The basic premise of this study, therefore, is to highlight some of the lesser told stories. I am particularly interested in what philanthropic and pragmatic responses this crisis inspired, both among the authorities and among the Ottoman population themselves, and also in the collective action that sprung up between foreign consulates and the local Ottoman administrations. Given the unexpected nature and size of the exodus, and that the Ottomans were not prepared to receive such a massive level of immigration arriving in such desperate conditions, I am interested in how they coped.

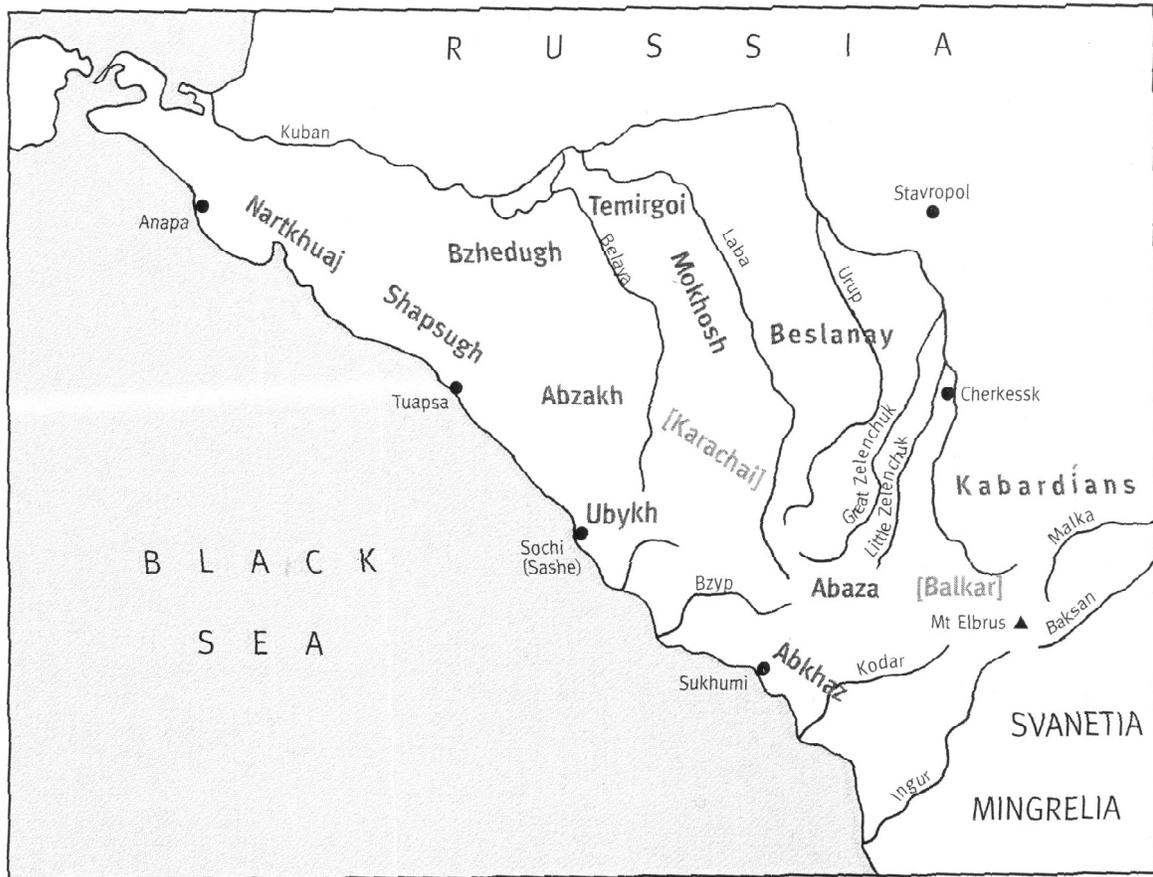
It will also be instructive to see how looking at the primary sources may challenge, correct, or at least enhance, our current understanding of events; how they may throw

³ Marc Pinson, "Ottoman Colonization of the Circassians in Rumili after the Crimean War", in *Études Balkaniques* 3 (1972).

some doubt on existing scholarship on this topic, which is patchy and often contradictory in itself. To what extent, for example, were the Ottomans so inefficient in their efforts as has often been claimed?

In terms of what this study will add to the pool of research, more specific information about the refugee arrivals will be provided, and it will quote more extensively from Foreign Office documents, as well as from the articles and letters of eye-witnesses sent to the British Press, and it will actually provide an analysis of these rather than just referencing them in passing. It will consider why the British had such an interest in this particular issue, and how British consuls sought to influence not only the Ottoman authorities but also their own government in reaction to such potentially calamitous events. It will also offer a focus on the earlier migrations, which I have called the 'First Circassian Exodus', because this period has been neglected for the most part from the Ottoman perspective. The study has been confined to about a decade, starting from 1858 when the first significant signs of large-scale migration became evident, and ending in 1867 when the final Abkhazian emigration took place.

Distribution of Circassian tribes in the 19th century



(Source: Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook*, page 20)

Chapter 1: The First Circassian Exodus

1858-1867

“The accounts that are received of the helpless and destitute state of these unhappy beings surpass in misery and horror anything I have ever seen recorded in connexion with suffering humanity.”⁴

This chapter discusses the first Circassian exodus to the Ottoman Empire, touching upon the underlying reasons for it, the nature and timings of it, and finally the conditions in which the Circassians found themselves during the deportations and on their Black Sea voyages. These factors elucidate the scale of the exodus, and provide a better idea of the conditions of the refugees upon their arrival in Ottoman ports.

⁴ ‘The Circassian Exodus’, *The Times*, May 9, 1864, p11.

1.i The Subjugation of the Circassian Tribes

Following the end of the Crimean War in 1856, and in 1859 the final submission of Imam Shamil's long-standing resistance campaign in the eastern Caucasus, the Russians were able to devote all their energies to the final conquest of the north-western Caucasus ('Circassia') after decades of fighting the Circassian tribes.

The Circassian territories were particularly attractive to the Russians due to their fertile valleys, their accessibility to large petroleum resources, and by 1853 the Black Sea had become very important for Russian trade, being responsible for a third of its exports⁵. It was also hoped that a trade route could be established from Tiflis to the Persian frontier, at which point it was felt that the Russians would truly possess the "keys of Asia"⁶. Another concern for the Russians was the proximity of the Circassians to the Ottoman Empire, which had a history of meddling in the region.

As it advanced, the Russian Army began systematically clearing the Circassian highlands of their indigenous inhabitants, often in particularly brutal and destructive ways, and replacing them with settlements of Cossacks, who they deemed to be more reliable subjects. The subjugation of the peoples of these coastal regions took on a particularly fierce form due to their long-standing campaign of guerrilla resistance against the Russian Army and the fact that they would not easily submit. Consequently, there was a general feeling within Russian military circles that the Circassians would have to be

⁵ Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History*, p.167.

⁶ *Invalide Russe*, quoted in 'Russia', *The Times*, August 8, 1864, p.10.

entirely removed from these areas in order to fully secure them. According to General Miliutin deportation as a strategy had been proposed as early as 1857⁷. Although the Russian Government did not give the plan official sanction until May 1862, in 1859 they had already started talks with the Ottomans to provide for a limited number of Circassian migrants.

It is evident that the plan had been on the table for some years, with the emphasis not just on clearing the Circassians from their mountain territories, but on actual deportation to the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the Crimean and Nogay Tatars were already being evicted to the Ottoman Empire from as early as 1856, and so the fate of the Circassians can be seen as belonging to part of a wider policy of forced (or induced) exile. The flight of the neighbouring Crimeans and Nogays encouraged many Circassians to migrate in anticipation of a forced deportation even before it had become official policy. At the same time, in the late-1850s the Ottomans were actually encouraging immigration in an effort to solve their own population scarcity and offered attractive terms in the form of land grants and tax and conscription exemptions.

Once deportation had become official in 1862, a massive exodus took place. Very few of the Circassian peoples remained in the Kuban, with one estimate showing that the indigenous population of the entire north-western Caucasus was reduced by a massive 94 per cent⁸.

⁷ Walter Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus: Past, Present, Future*, (forthcoming), ch.4, p.1.

⁸ The estimates of Russian historian Narochnikskii, in Richmond, ch.4, p.5. Stephen Shenfield notes a similar rate of reduction with less than 10 per cent of the Circassians (including the Abkhazians) remaining. (Stephen Shenfield, "The Circassians: A Forgotten Genocide?", in *The Massacre in History*, p.154.)

There is debate over whether the Circassians jumped, or whether they were pushed, having technically been given an option of transference to settlements among the Cossacks in the Upper Kuban area, or expulsion to the Ottoman Empire.⁹ Ultimately, the most likely explanation for an exodus of this scale is that survival became the primary concern of the Circassians, and that they simply had no choice in the matter. As one eye-witness put it, “The sacrifice of independence alone would surely not have induced 300,000 people to fly in a body from their country.”¹⁰

1.ii Exodus: The ‘Suicide of a Nation’¹¹

The migrations of Circassians to the Ottoman Empire happened in stages, so that, as individual tribes were subdued by the Russian Army, at each point in the conquest some families or whole tribes felt the need to flee their lands whether as a result of panic, direct compulsion by the Russians or due to severely constrained circumstances. This means that this initial Circassian exodus happened in intense waves during the course of about a decade from 1858 to the end of the 1860s.¹²

Although there is evidence of earlier migrations on a smaller scale, the exodus proper - that is, the beginning of a stream of large-scale migrations - has been dated back to as

⁹ In fact, where some of the tribes had initially submitted to the Russians on the understanding of being relocated to the Kuban - such as the Nartkhuj, and sections of the Abzakhs and the Shapsugh - they were nevertheless compelled to emigrate.

¹⁰ ‘The Circassian Exodus’, *The Times*, May 9, 1864, p.11.

¹¹ The exodus as described by Dr. Sandwith writing from Gratz to *The Spectator* (reproduced by *The Manchester Guardian*, August 2, 1864, p.6).

¹² In fact, although not considered here, migrations on a smaller scale continued well into the 1870s up until the second exodus, which took place following the 1877-8 Russo-Ottoman War, and the expulsion of Muslims from Bulgaria and other parts of the Balkans.

early as 1858 when some 30,000 families reportedly departed for the Ottoman Empire¹³ (although it is probable at this stage that the ‘Circassians’ supposedly entering the Ottoman Empire were mostly Nogay Tatars, often confusingly identified with their Circassian neighbours; they lived on either side of the Kuban River, and probably in many cases they also migrated together). Unfortunately, research on this earlier period is somewhat lacking, with most historians concentrating on the period from 1862-4 when official deportations had been sanctioned and the departure of Circassian refugees to the Ottoman Empire increased sharply and became particularly concentrated. However, some special consideration of these earlier migrations from 1858 has been included here as they amount to no insignificant number and they throw up important questions, for example, over whether the Circassians were being forcibly expelled much earlier than the official sanction of it in 1862.

One such missing detail is that there is not only evidence of significant migrations occurring in 1859, but in fact there is also evidence of the forced deportation of Circassians occurring at this time when some of the northern tribes around the Kuban area appear to have been caught up in the expulsion of the Nogay Tatars, alongside whom many of them had lived, and as the Russians advanced south. The refugees of this period were a particularly mixed bunch, with a number of groups were being pushed towards the coast by an advancing Russian Army, and one report in January 1860 even observed a group of Kalmyks arriving in Istanbul.¹⁴ The numbers of this mixed group were estimated

¹³ Shenfield, “A Forgotten Genocide?”, p.154. This figure does not seem to be supported by other researchers.

¹⁴ ‘Turkey’, *The Scotsman*, January 9, 1860, p.3. These Kalmyks were the leftovers of a much larger community who had made their own exodus from the Russians to western China in 1771.

at 16,000, which was no small number even though it is hard to determine what proportion of them were actually Circassians. Importantly, however, the editor of the *Levant Herald* in Istanbul noted that the Russians had given, “the Mussulman population of those parts [from the banks of the Kouban and other parts of Circassia] a choice of removal to Siberia or emigration hither”, and placed this phase of forced, or at the very least encouraged, emigration as having begun in mid-1859, with new arrivals occurring on a weekly basis¹⁵. By the time of his letter in January 1860, it was estimated that 18,000-20,000 refugees were now “packed together in the damp khans of Scutari and Stamboul”¹⁶. The fact that the article was entitled ‘The Circassian Exodus’ does suggest either that an exodus was already in existence or that one was imminent, and it also implies a significant level of migration.

Of this earlier period British Foreign Office reports also shed some light on the methods employed by individual Circassians attempting to flee. Vice-Consul Stevens at Trabzon noted his confusion over the arrival in 1858 of non-slave Circassians travelling on slave vessels, who then disembarked at Trabzon.¹⁷ Consul Eldridge in Kertch reported the departure of 400 Circassians in October 1858 claiming to be performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, and a further 250 in November 1858, with others expected, and commented that such a large group of Circassian pilgrims had never been seen before. Eldridge believed these ‘pilgrims’ in fact to be emigrants “whom the Russian Government had induced to

¹⁵ A letter from the Editor of *The Levant Herald* (sent January 1860), printed in ‘The Circassian Exodus’, *The Times*, February 7, 1860, p.6. This is corroborated by the British Consul at Kertch in No.25 From Eldridge, June 15, 1859, copied in FO 881/3065.

¹⁶ Op cit.

¹⁷ No.55 From Stevens, December 3, 1857, FO 84/1060; No.101 From Alison, January 28, 1858, copied in FO 881/3065.

leave their country in order to free itself from semi-hostile tribes on the Circassian frontier”¹⁸. Eldridge also reported the departure of a Russian vessel carrying 400 Circassian slaves from Soukhoun Kalé to Trabzon¹⁹, and some ten days later Consul Stevens reported the arrival of 300 ‘Abaziottes’²⁰ wanting to settle near Samsoon, with about 5,000 more still expected²¹. It seems, therefore, that unofficial, and perhaps uncounted, migrants entered the Ottoman Empire in these early years posing either as slaves or as Hajj pilgrims. It also appears that while Shenfield’s 30,000 families seems an unlikely figure for Circassians at this time, we do nevertheless begin to see more substantial arrivals from 1858-9 as the first tribes were conquered by the Russians.

By 1860, the Russians had formally negotiated a treaty with the Ottomans to accept the immigration of 40-50,000 Circassians, which the Ottomans welcomed at this stage hoping to gain extra manpower for agriculture, work on the new roads and railways, and for the army. Hereafter the floodgates slowly opened and large numbers of Circassians become more identifiable, particularly as the Russians by this stage were actually restricting Crimean emigration and the Nogay migrations were beginning to peter out. Consul Dickson in Soukhoun Kalé noted in November 1860 the arrival of 2,500 families of Circassians within a two-month period en route to the Ottoman port of Trabzon. A further 500 had arrived by land from the ‘Caucasian Line’.²² This would amount to some 10,000 people, no insignificant number. Stephen Shenfield also notes the departure of

¹⁸ No.56 From Eldridge, November 10, 1858, copied in FO 881/3065.

¹⁹ Op cit.

²⁰ Presumably Abazas.

²¹ No.61 From Stevens, November 21, 1858, copied in FO 881/3065.

²² No.6. From Dickson, November 17, 1860, FO 97/424.

4,000 families from the northern tribes in 1860 following their subjugation by General Yevdokimov.²³

By this stage a number of the tribes had already been subdued by the Russians, and from 1861-1864 the remaining Circassian tribes were pacified following a final attempt to unite by the Ubykhs, Shapsugh, Abadzekhs, Sadzians and Abkhazians into “one huge barrage”²⁴. This period saw hundreds of thousands of Circassians being driven to the coastal ports for departure to the Ottoman domains. Entire peoples such as the Ubykhs and Sadzians left to a man, along with the Akhchipsoo, Jighett and Pshkoo tribes. Those Abkhazians that remained erupted into a final effort in 1866, which resulted in their expulsion (some 20,000 people) to the Ottoman Empire in 1867.

As Alan Fisher points out, “An accurate count of refugees from the Crimea and the Caucasus... is not possible to obtain. Most of those leaving the Caucasus did it in a hurry, in a disorganised fashion, without passing any official border point where they might have been counted or officially noted.”²⁵ However, various estimates have been made based on the available documents. Demographic historian Justin McCarthy estimates that by 1864 about 600,000 Circassians had left for the Ottoman Empire, with more arriving after this date.²⁶ Another estimate puts the Circassian migration as high as a million by

²³ Shenfield, p.151.

²⁴ Stanislav Lak'oba, “History: 18th century-1917”, in *The Abkhazians: A Handbook*, p.80.

²⁵ Alan Fisher, “Emigration of Muslims from the Russian Empire in the Years after the Crimean War”, in *A Precarious Balance*, p.179.

²⁶ Justin McCarthy, “Factors in the Analysis of the Population of Anatolia”, in *Population History of the Middle East and the Balkans*, p.104.

the end of 1866.²⁷ Finally, Kemal Karpat has estimated that up to 2 million Caucasians, most of whom were Circassians, emigrated between 1859 and 1879, with only about 1.5 million of those actually reaching their destination. (He also estimates that a further 500,000 Circassians left for the Ottoman Empire between 1881 and 1914.)²⁸

Whichever estimate one uses, it is nevertheless clear that the scale of the emigrations from Circassian territories to the Ottoman Empire was massive, and that the sudden influx of such large groups of refugees will have had no small impact on the Ottoman localities that received them. Many refugees did make the trek by land, but due to the location of the tribes on the Black Sea coast, the majority of refugees made the voyage by sea with many tragic consequences.

1.iii The Black Sea Voyage: ‘Floating Graveyards’²⁹

The Circassian tribes that had ‘chosen’ deportation were either marched to ports along the Black Sea coast, or left to find their own way to places where they had to wait in often desperate conditions for transports to convey them across to the Ottoman reception ports. The deportations were not conducted with any kind of efficiency on the part of the Russians, with the Circassians often left to find unchartered transports, which also left them open to abuses by the captains of the vessels. One observer in May 1864 wrote, “The wearied and dispirited crowd, of all sexes and ages, reach the sea-coast almost

²⁷ Paul Henze, “Circassian Resistance to Russia”, in *The North-Caucasus Barrier*, p.103.

²⁸ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914*, p.69.

²⁹ Kanitz, quoted by Marc Pinson, “Ottoman Colonization of the Circassians in Rumili after the Crimean War”, in *Études Balkaniques* 3, p.76.

without food or the means of shelter. They await, in hunger and under the open sky, the uncertain advent of a vessel that may bear them to a Turkish port.”³⁰

As the deportations increased, Russian, Ottoman, and even British vessels were chartered to convey the refugees in what must have itself been a massive operation. In 1864, the Russians and Ottomans made an agreement to disarm their warships to use as transports because not enough vessels could be found. In fact, the burden of the operation landed on the shoulders of the Ottoman Government and the transporting of refugees took a huge toll on Ottoman finances, leading to a suggestion by Sir Henry Bulwer, British Ambassador at Istanbul, that the British Government either allocate a loan or agree to charter British merchant steamers to be used for this purpose.³¹ In the same despatch he noted that, “In spite of every effort it has not been possible to provide the means of transport necessary for conveying to Turkey the great masses of people who are now collected on the shores of the Black Sea”.³²

The Russians offered financial inducements to encourage vessels to take the refugees to Ottoman ports, paying 5 roubles per head (of which the Circassians had to pay 2 roubles, or the equivalent, themselves)³³. Many had to sell their cattle or belongings in order to pay for the voyage. There were even reports in the *Levant Herald* of Circassians being reduced to selling into slavery one of their number for every 30 passengers in order to

³⁰ *The Scotsman*, May 13, 1864, p.2.

³¹ No.120 From Bulwer, May 25, 1864, FO 97/424. Neither the loan nor the transports were forthcoming on this occasion, although the British did provide transports at various points, and independent steamers also transported refugees.

³² *Op cit.*

³³ No.34 From Clipperton, December 21, 1863, copied in FO 881/3065

pay for the voyage.³⁴ Often, however, vessels would refuse to carry the Circassians as word had spread of the prevalence of disease among them, and many of the ships' crews themselves had begun to fall ill as a result of transporting the refugees. Those that did agree to convey the Circassians tended to overload their vessels in order to make as much profit out of the exercise as possible, and so a large number of the refugee transports sank en route. Clipperton, the British Consul at Kertch, noted in 1864 that, "In most cases the vessels were from 150 to 200 tons burden, into which are crowded from 1,200 to 1,800 Circassians in a most unhealthy state from famine, dirt and fever."³⁵

The overcrowding and the conditions on the transports were appalling. Many Circassian refugees contracted scurvy on the voyage. Mortality rates on board were so high, with incidences such as being forced to drink seawater driving down the general condition of those surviving the voyages, that one eye-witness described the transports as having "decks swarming with the dead and dying"³⁶. One Russian officer's memoirs recounted that, "the Turkish skippers... like cargo threw anyone who showed the slightest sign of illness overboard. The waves threw the corpses of these unfortunate souls onto the shores of Anatolia... Scarcely half of those who set out made it to their goal."³⁷

By the time the Circassians had reached Ottoman ports, they had been subjected to famine, war, with its associated atrocities, and to a long and arduous trek to the coast. Most of them had contracted smallpox, typhus, dysentery, or ague; they were suffering

³⁴ Reprinted in 'The Circassian Slave Trade', *The Scotsman*, August 30, 1864, p.4.

³⁵ No.19 From Clipperton, May 10, 1864, FO 97/424.

³⁶ 'The Circassian Exodus', *The Times*, May 9, 1864, p.11.

³⁷ Drozdov, as quoted by Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, ch.4, p.4.

from thirst, starvation and cold; and the Black Sea voyages only served to incubate their existing conditions, and in some cases they contracted other diseases on board. Those who died on the voyage were thrown overboard. As it was put in a petition by Circassian leaders to Queen Victoria in 1864, “Many are the lives which have been lost in battle, from hunger in the mountains, from destitution on the sea-coast, and from want of skill at sea.”³⁸

The various transports mostly conveyed the refugees to the Ottoman ports of Trabzon and Samsun, but some transports did travel directly to Sinop, and to Varna and Küstendji on the western coast. Refugees would then be moved again, sometimes almost immediately, to other ports including Ineboli, and Burgas, and initially a number were also moved to Istanbul. Refugees also arrived in smaller numbers at Batum, and many of those who settled here had to move again when the Russians annexed the port in 1878.

Only a portion of those who had left the Circassian coast actually made it to the Ottoman ports, and far higher mortality occurred on their immediate arrivals. Some died while performing quarantine, either on the beaches, the transports that had conveyed them or in the off-shore lazarettos. Others fell foul of disease in the makeshift accommodation given to them in khans and abandoned buildings, and ultimately in the encampments set up for them where they were to await the prospect of a further Black Sea voyage under similar conditions so that they could be conveyed to the locations of their final resettlement. There was a high death rate at each stage of the process. Another eye-witness wrote

³⁸ Enclosure in No.3 From Sir Henry Bulwer, April 12, 1864, FO 881/1259. See Appendix I for full text.

about, “Dense masses of ragged men, women, and children literally covered the sea shore. All looked wan and hungry. Many were all but naked. Several lay dying...”³⁹

Justin McCarthy estimates that the mortality rate among the Circassian refugees was at an average of 30 per cent⁴⁰, including those who had died during the deportations and on their immediate arrival. In 1864, Vice-Consul Stevens in Trabzon rated the mortality among the refugees there at 50 per cent.⁴¹ Stephen Shenfield estimates that probably over a half of the original Circassian population has not been accounted for, thereby suggesting that at least one million Circassians perished due to the exodus from their homelands, if not more.⁴²

³⁹ ‘The Circassian Exodus’, a letter to the Editor of *The Times*, June 17, 1864, p.7.

⁴⁰ Justin McCarthy, “Factors in the Analysis of the Population of Anatolia, 1800-1878”, in *Population History of the Middle East and the Balkans*, p.106.

⁴¹ No.20 From Stevens, September 24, 1864, copied in FO 881/3065.

⁴² Shenfield, p.154.



Map 1. The Black Sea Today

(Source: Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History*, page xvii)

Chapter 2: Circassian Arrivals:

‘Samsoun Fever’⁴³

*“Everywhere you meet with the sick, the dying, and the dead...
Every dwelling, every corner of the streets, every spot occupied
by the immigrants, has become a hotbed of infection.”⁴⁴*

This chapter focuses on the Ottoman experience of the Circassian refugees. It will give details of the conditions in the Black Sea ports and encampments where the refugees were landed, and it will consider the initial, short-term impacts that these Circassians had on local Ottoman society. Some of the experiences of the refugees during their initial removals from the ports will also be considered in order to illustrate ongoing problems.

⁴³ A phrase coined by Consul Barker for illnesses that became prevalent in the Black Sea ports on the arrival of large groups of Circassian refugees. (No.3 From Barker, April 28, 1862, FO 78/1691.)

⁴⁴ Dr Barozzi, Sanitary Inspector to the Ottoman Board of Health, quoted in ‘The Circassian Exodus’, *The Times*, June 13, 1864, p.10. (See Appendix III for the full text of his report on Samsun.)

What can be gauged from considering all of the accounts on the Circassian refugee landings is that, wherever they were sent, a familiar tale could be told, only really varying in the scale of the problem rather than in the details. At the height of the Circassian exodus from 1862-1865, often as soon as refugees were cleared from a region new arrivals would take their place and problems would start anew. Each batch of new arrivals could number tens of thousands of Circassians, in some cases numbers neared the hundred thousand mark and more. Moreover, by the time the Circassians arrived, resources were already seriously compromised by the Crimean and Nogay migrations. This meant that ports like Samsun and Trabzon carried the burden of an almost unrelenting wave of refugees and disease for an extended period of about a decade, if not for longer. Not surprisingly, these events took a massive toll on the local population of a town, as well as on the local administration, with resources becoming completely overstretched. What is perhaps surprising is that these ports nevertheless continued to function, with trade at Trabzon remaining more or less steady and at Samsun actually increasing during the 1860s.⁴⁵

Initially, the Circassians were crowded into improvised accommodation of all sorts, including stables, abandoned buildings, warehouses, and khans, and others sought refuge in mosques, *madrassahs*, and *tekkes*⁴⁶. This was often after some days of literally waiting on the shore until the authorities could find space for them. One eye-witness account from Varna described the conditions of the Circassians left waiting on the beaches there: “We have had much rain, especially at night, and these poor wretches have had to sleep

⁴⁵ Üner Turgay, “Ottoman-British Trade through Southeastern Black Sea Ports during the Nineteenth Century”, in *Économie et Sociétés dans l’Empire Ottoman*, p.307, 310.

⁴⁶ *Madrassahs* are religious schools, often with boarding facilities for the students; *tekkes* are Sufi centres.

out in it with nothing to cover them but their ordinary clothes... After one of these nights the dead lie thick on the ground, the others longing, I should think, to follow them.”⁴⁷

Another observer reported a similar situation at Samsun in May 1864, when he saw, “about 45,000 of these people on the shore, lying about in mud and wretchedness, and they were dying at the rate of 500 to 700 per day. At the same time a vessel lay in the harbour, the deck of which and rigging were crowded like ants, waiting for room to be cleared ashore. They lay scattered about over hill and valley, some in tents, but many without any kind of shelter.”⁴⁸

Conditions in the makeshift accommodation were not much improved, as they were often damp and did not provide much shelter from the elements. In the towns, while they waited either to be removed to encampments or to be transported elsewhere, many of the Circassians were forced into begging; some resorted to gathering wood to sell, or even selling their daily rations and the clothes distributed to them by the local authorities. According to a number of reports, the situation had become so desperate that there were instances of Circassians selling their children into slavery, and as Sir Henry Bulwer had pointed out, callous as this act seemed, the mortality rates were so high among the Circassians that they might have believed those sold as slaves would have had a better chance of actual survival.⁴⁹

Encampments outside some of the port towns were eventually set up for the refugees.

Conditions in the camps were far from good. Dr Barozzi, the Sanitary Inspector seconded

⁴⁷ An extract from a private letter from Varna. ‘The Circassian Exodus’, *The Scotsman*, June 28, 1864, p.3.

⁴⁸ An extract from a private letter sent to *The Times*, August 31, 1864, p.9.

⁴⁹ *The Scotsman*, January 31, 1867, p.2.

by the Ottoman Board of Health to examine the situation at Samsun, reported that, “From 40,000 to 50,000 individuals in the most absolute state of destitution, preyed upon by disease, decimated by death, are cast there without shelter, without bread, and without sepulture.”⁵⁰ He still had 11 ships and seven cutters full of refugees waiting to be landed in the harbour. The situation seemed desperate.

In ‘Saradereh’ and ‘Akchekaleh’, the encampments outside Trabzon, conditions were similar, at one point with an estimated 300 deaths occurring there daily.⁵¹ The Russian ministerial journal, *l’Invalide Russe*, estimated that 23,000 refugees occupied the former camp, with a further 17,000 at the latter.⁵² Another encampment was established in Hayder Pasha for orphans and slaves, most of whom were eventually shipped to Istanbul.

Even when the Circassians had been evacuated to the encampments, large numbers of them still made their way into the towns during the daytime and so contact with the townsfolk did not cease, and the impact of their presence was still felt on a large scale. The Circassian refugees were found everywhere. Dr Barozzi noted, “...upwards of 30,000 individuals, coming from the encampment at Irmak and Dervend, encumber the squares, obstruct the streets, invade enclosed grounds, penetrate everywhere, remain stationed there during the whole day, and retire only late after sunset.”⁵³

⁵⁰ *The Times*, June 13, 1864, p.10 (See Appendix III).

⁵¹ No.10 From Stevens, June 18, 1864, FO 97/424.

⁵² Enclosed in No.327 From Lord Napier, July 3, 1864, FO 97/424.

⁵³ *The Times*, June 13, 1864, p.10.

The towns themselves inevitably suffered from these continued influxes, with typhus and smallpox spreading to the local inhabitants. Dr Fauvel, the health inspector working for the French Consulate, had also credited the Nogays and Circassians with bringing cholera as far as Istanbul in 1860.⁵⁴ Cholera made another appearance at Trabzon in 1865, having been brought over by the “weekly Russian steamer”⁵⁵, and led to the townsfolk abandoning their homes in panic. Even what cattle some of the refugees had brought with them was diseased, and possibly as a result of this a cattle plague raged throughout the Trabzon province in 1865.

In February 1864, Vice-Consul Stevens reported a state of panic in Trabzon, with inhabitants preparing to abandon the town. Many of the doctors and employees sent to deal with the Circassians had fallen ill and died; the dead were not being buried properly so that the parts of town near to the cemeteries had become uninhabitable. The streets had become filthy, and the town’s water supplies had been tainted; provisions had become scarce and fuel had run out. Mortality among the local inhabitants had fallen just short of 550 in two months.⁵⁶ All the villages within the vicinity of the refugee encampments had become infected by disease. A number of the foreign consuls themselves had fallen foul of typhus fever.

It was also feared in April that a famine would result if the expected 100,000 Ubykhs came to Trabzon, with bread supplies severely depleted and the local inhabitants unable

⁵⁴ Daniel Panzac, “Vingt ans au service de la médecine turque: le Dr Fauvel à Istanbul (1847-1867)”, in *Population et Santé Dans L’Empire Ottoman (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)*, p.114.

⁵⁵ No.5 From Stevens, August 2, 1865, FO 195/812.

⁵⁶ No.1 From Stevens, February 17, 1864, FO 881/1259.

to get their corn ground because the mills had been taken over by government officials for the supply of the refugees. Unsurprisingly, on occasion local commerce became paralysed by the situation.⁵⁷ In May, Stevens reported that the town bakers in Samsun had closed their ovens and quitted the town, which had nearly provoked a riot.⁵⁸ Disorder was generally feared, particularly among the refugees in the encampments due to the overcrowding and poor conditions, and to the lack of policing.

To provide some idea of the scale of mortality, Dr Fauvel estimated that more than 300,000 Circassians had sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire between November 1863 and August 1864 alone, and that by the end of the year two-thirds of those had died.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ No.9 From Stevens, April 15, 1864, FO 97/424.

⁵⁸ No.15 From Stevens, May 19. 1864, FO 881/1259.

⁵⁹ Panzac, "Vingt ans au service de la médecine turque", p.110.

Chapter 3: Ottoman Responses:

Pragmatism or Policy?

“This immigration thus left to itself is an actual calamity.”⁶⁰

This chapter focuses on the initial Ottoman responses to the Circassian refugees. Individual and local initiatives that this crisis inspired will be highlighted, and the efficiency of the Ottoman official response will be examined, considering both local and central government reactions.

⁶⁰ Dr Barozzi, quoted in ‘The Circassian Exodus’, *The Times*, June 13, 1864, p.10. (See Appendix III.)

The Ottoman response to what must be called a refugee crisis has been criticised both by contemporary reports, as well as by modern researchers on the subject. Having only planned in 1860 for the gradual migration of 40,000-50,000 Circassians, their arrangements were, to quote Stephen Shenfield, “grossly inadequate”⁶¹ to meet the needs of this massive and sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of diseased and dying exiles. Marc Pinson goes so far as to suggest that very little policy at all had been formulated for dealing with the refugees, given that each wave of immigration had led to the reoccurrence of the same problems.⁶² Observers at the time were kinder, stating that the authorities were doing what they could for the Circassians, but that resources were seriously constrained.

3.i Pragmatism

Initial reactions to the refugee arrivals would suggest that much of the Ottoman response owed more to individual and local pragmatism than to hard and fast official policy. Therefore, the quality of care varied from one province to another depending on local conditions and resources. As one consular report put it, “...they are cared for so far as the Pasha’s means allow”⁶³, which for the most part involved the provision of daily bread rations (which were not consistently forthcoming), some sort of initial shelter where possible, and the provision of clothing when it could be obtained. Often inadequate medical supplies were also given, and doctors sent to inspect conditions. According to

⁶¹ Shenfield, p.153.

⁶² Pinson, p.72.

⁶³ No.9 From Stevens, April 15, 1864, FO 97/424.

one source, in some cases refugees were sent *hocas*, police and other government officials, and mosques were built for them.⁶⁴

Reports often showed the local authorities at a loss over what to do for the refugees. Due to the daily fresh arrivals in ever increasing numbers, likewise the problems that the local authorities had to cope with also multiplied and became more complex. The coffers rapidly ran low and local initiatives began to spring up in order to meet the immediate need. Collections were made to raise funds for the relief of the Circassians, often involving a number of different communities, including the foreign consulates. However, these tended not to collect enough to relieve the problem for long, but did arrange for proper food, clothing and medical supplies to be provided to some of the refugees.

Generous contributions were made towards the relief effort, including donations by several ministers, and the Grand Vizier; the Sultan himself donated £50,000 from the Privy Purse and also gifted land for use for the building of encampments and for the ultimate resettlement of the refugees, including 20 imperial farms and his kiosk at Hayder Pasha⁶⁵. There is also evidence⁶⁶ of some public sympathy for the refugees among the local populations that received them. In Ineboli, local women took it upon themselves to go into the refugee residences in order to wash the bodies of the Circassian women who had died, but this was eventually stopped by the local governor due to concerns over contagion.⁶⁶ In Widdin, in modern-day Bulgaria, the local consul reported both Muslim and Christian local inhabitants had volunteered to increase their grain contributions for

⁶⁴ McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, p.54, endnote no.55. *Hocas* were religious advisors.

⁶⁵ An extract from a letter from Dr Millingen, reproduced in *The Scotsman*, August 16, 1864, p.4.

⁶⁶ A letter from Ineboli reproduced in 'The Circassians', *The Times*, July 11, 1864, p.10.

the subsistence of the Circassians settled there. (He also mentioned his belief that reports of the Circassians stirring up discord in Bulgaria had been invented by “Russian agents”.)⁶⁷ Another consular report notes that a number of the refugees, having been transported to Kutahia, were sent back to “European Turkey” because they had hoped to join their countrymen there. These refugees were ultimately detained in Yenişehir, but it does give some indication of the lengths that individual officials would go to in order to try and meet the wishes of the Circassians.⁶⁸ In Cyprus, a number of the local Muslim inhabitants took in Circassian orphans from a transport that had been landed there, which had led to complaints from the Christian population of the island as they felt they were not being allowed to help. This provides an alternative angle on the inter-community tensions that the Circassians allegedly had stirred up by their presence.⁶⁹

Ultimately, however, the relief effort for the refugees did impose a burden on the local populations. In some cases, the burden of care for one Circassian family was divided among four local families, in so doing dividing the Circassians across different districts. Sir Henry Bulwer believed this to add “to the miseries of the already miserable condition of the Turkish peasant”.⁷⁰ According to Marc Pinson, the local inhabitants in Bulgaria had been expected to help in the construction of huts for the Circassians, and he also cites one observer who claimed that the local Bulgarians had been forced out of their homes to

⁶⁷ No.28 From Consul-General Longworth, July 15, 1864, FO 97/424. This is based on a conversation he had had with the local Ottoman governor. It is possible the latter was trying to paint a glowing picture of inter-community relations. However, as this report preceded the Bulgarian insurrection of 1867, and the later nationalistic politicking that went on, perhaps it can be assumed that there would have been no reason to misinform in this respect.

⁶⁸ No.18 From Sandison, July 20, 1864, FO 97/424.

⁶⁹ No.81 From Stuart, October 30, 1864, FO 97/424.

⁷⁰ No.7 From Sir Henry Bulwer, May 3, 1864, FO 881/1259.

accommodate the Circassians⁷¹, although this contradicts other reports which state the Circassians were settled either in existing colonies or on disused land.⁷² Kemal Karpat further adds that, “The government made extensive use of the old Islamic ethics of aiding migrants by charging the native communities to accept the immigrants as brothers and help them build houses and lead a normal life in the new land.”⁷³ This, coupled with the effects of disease on the population, along with the general disruption caused, likely stirred up substantial resentment among the local inhabitants.

Moreover, criticisms were directed at the Ottomans for their mishandling of funds over the crisis. One private letter sent to *The Spectator* magazine from Dr Sandwith in Gratz claimed that out of the £50,000 given for the aid of the refugees, only £1,000 had actually reached them, accusing Ottoman officials of having each stolen a share along the way.⁷⁴ Others were less accusatory and put it down to simple mal-administration. Other mistakes were also noted, such as the abandoning of Circassians on the beach at Varna when they were supposed to have been transported on to Rustchuk.⁷⁵ Some abuses of refugees at the hands of local governors were noted, as well as a number of further problems that occurred during the trans-shipping of refugees to new ports. One horrible incident involved acts of violence on a brig bound for Cyprus, where witnesses allegedly saw mutilated and decapitated bodies washing up on shore and refugees being tied up and

⁷¹ Pinson, p.78.

⁷² For example, ‘The Circassians at Constantinople’, *The Times*, September 30, 1864, p.10.

⁷³ Kemal Karpat, “Muslim Migration: Response to Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh”, in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History*, p.322.

⁷⁴ Reproduced in *The Manchester Guardian*, August 2, 1864, p.6. It is likely that this is not a reliable estimate, but nevertheless reflects sentiments at the time.

⁷⁵ ‘The Circassian Exodus’, *The Scotsman*, June 28, 1864, p.3.

thrown overboard while still alive. Only a third of those who had been boarded landed at Cyprus alive.⁷⁶

Complaints were made by Circassians in Ineboli who felt the authorities had abandoned them there in terrible conditions.⁷⁷ It was felt that the sanitary conditions of the towns were neglected, and another letter sent from Ineboli to the *Levant Herald* complained about the Board of Health, that it should have had representatives present in districts at all times, and that more able men were needed rather than the “obsolete old fogies” who had been sent.⁷⁸ Those inspectors like Dr Barozzi who did elicit some level of respect were considered to be severely over-stretched and under-resourced in their undertakings. In Dr Barozzi’s case, he was only one man responsible for several refugee camps situated not a few miles apart.

3.ii Policy

A number of positives can nevertheless be identified, as well as evidence of direction by central government. Lengths were taken by the Board of Health to control the spread of disease from the encampments into the wider provinces. A quarantine of 15 days was imposed at the ports on all arrivals from the Circassian coast, and as things became more efficient the refugees were quickly removed from the main towns into encampments on the outskirts to reduce infection. Quarantine offices were already established in the ports. Lime was applied to the graves in order to disinfect them, and arrangements made for the

⁷⁶ No.81 From Stuart, October 30, 1864, FO 97/424.

⁷⁷ ‘The Circassian Emigration’, *The Scotsman*, September 13, 1864, p.3.

⁷⁸ Reproduced in ‘The Circassians’, *The Times*, September 10, 1864, p.10.

proper burial of the dead. Thousands of refugees were normally trans-shipped to other ports in a matter of days, which even by modern standards would be an organisational feat in itself.

In terms of refugee welfare, a *firman* from the Porte in August 1864 was despatched to Samsun and Trabzon prohibiting the slave trade in Circassians. The Immigration Commission – set up in 1860 to facilitate the resettlement of migrants – reunited with their families many of those who had been compelled into slavery in order to pay for their Black Sea passage.⁷⁹

Some scale of the administrative headache this refugee crisis must have been can be gauged by the fact that members of the army were brought in to oversee the transporting of the refugees. Clearly it had become an operation of military dimensions. Nured Pasha, Commander of the Turkish Artillery and a veteran of the Crimean War, was sent by the Porte to Küstendji to facilitate the movement of Circassians to other parts of the Danube. According to one eye-witness, over night he had arranged for a variety of transports for the refugees, as well as several tons of soap to be distributed to them. His brief had been to find what food for them he could, and to “locate them where employment could be had”.⁸⁰

Justin McCarthy also points to a higher level of efficiency than has otherwise been accorded to the Ottomans when he suggests that, “In areas in which Ottoman government

⁷⁹ From the *Levant Herald*, reproduced in ‘The Circassian Slave Trade’, *The Scotsman*, August 30, 1864, p.4.

⁸⁰ A letter to the Editor from the Vicar of Lydney, *The Times*, June 17, 1864, p.7.

control was strong, the [Immigration] Commission took detailed, family-by-family and person-by-person counts of refugees.”⁸¹ Also on this point, in 1863 inspectors were sent out to the provinces to assess the extent of any local problems, and from 1864 a number of provincial reform laws came into effect. Provinces were reorganised with an emphasis on the improvement of public works, and municipalities took over from the guilds and *millets* key responsibilities like the cleaning of streets, the proper maintenance of sewage systems, and the maintenance of public health. The new local councils by 1871 had also taken on the responsibilities for public charitable institutions, including hospitals, cemeteries, and orphanages.⁸² These reforms would likely have come into effect anyway, but given the focus on the reorganising and improvement of vital public facilities and institutions, it seems likely that the refugee crisis proved to be something of a catalyst for them, and they do imply that steps were taken at an administrative level for an overhaul of local government systems once this and previous emergencies had shown them to be inadequate.

Moreover, reports do suggest that by the time of the final Abkhazian migrations in 1867, both the Ottomans and the Russians were becoming far more efficient in their handling of the refugee problem. Preparations were made in advance of the landings for the refugees to be split equally between Batum, Trabzon, Samsun and Sinop. The Ottomans sent boats to collect the Abkhazians, and tents and barracks were ready and waiting for them. No contagious diseases broke out among the Abkhazians, and steps were taken to ensure

⁸¹ Justin McCarthy, “Muslim Refugees in Turkey: The Balkan Wars, World War I, and the Turkish War of Independence”, in *Population History of the Middle East and the Balkans*, p.47, footnote no.1.

⁸² Stanford Shaw, “Local Administrations in the Tanzimat”, in *Studies in Ottoman and Turkish History: Life with the Ottomans*, pp.279; 282-3.

their accommodation was properly ventilated, and that food was provided. In return, the Abkhazians were said to have been “quiet and orderly”⁸³ in contrast to some of the previous incidences. Sir Gifford Palgrave, the new Vice-Consul at Trabzon, commented that, “Much credit is due to the Local Government of this place, for their attention to the police, sanitary condition, and other circumstances of the said Abkhasians from first to last.”⁸⁴

By the time of the second Circassian exodus in the late-1870s, along with the arrival of refugees driven out from the Balkan provinces, the Ottomans had established a Charity Commission to support the work of a revived Immigration Commission. By 1893, a General Immigration Commission had been established involving 13 different departments, which shows not only heightened organisation but also suggests something of the scale of the problem by the end of the century. Moreover, some clear strategies can be seen in the Ottoman resettlement and employment of the refugees however the resettlement policy is outside the scope of this research.

To summarise, the Immigration Commission kept extensive records on the refugee crisis of this period and so these might eventually yield more details on the Ottoman policy response, and we do already have some evidence that directions were being given from Istanbul, that it was not simply a haphazard affair, and even of some quite efficient levels of organisation. However, given the very sudden nature and scale of the exodus, it was inevitable that the quality of Ottoman response will have depended on the pragmatism,

⁸³ No.13 From Palgrave, May 16, 1867, FO 97/424.

⁸⁴ No.39 From Palgrave, August 1, 1867, FO 97/424.

resources, and initiatives of the individual local governments and of the local communities.

Chapter 4: British Responses

*“As for himself, he would sooner be an Alaric or an Attila
than he would be either the Emperor of Russia,
the Emperor of Austria, or the King of Prussia.(Cheers.)”*⁸⁵

Due to the reliance of this study on British sources, this chapter will look in more detail at British reactions to the Circassian refugee question, considering reasons for British interest as well as highlighting any expressions of public sympathy. A section will be devoted to the Circassian Aid Committee as an example of British philanthropic initiative. Another section will examine the experiences and contributions of the British consular staff who were themselves caught up in the crisis.

⁸⁵ Referring to the Earl of Shaftesbury, and the reaction of the audience, at a public meeting held by the Circassian Aid Committee in London. ‘The Expulsion of the Circassians’, *The Times*, July 8, 1864, p.12.

4.i Public and Political Sentiments

The Circassian refugee crisis arrived in the Ottoman Empire at a time when British political and public opinion was still more or less dominated by post-Crimean War sentiments. Political opinion in the 1860s was also still influenced by ex-Foreign Office personnel who happened to be either Turkophiles, like Stratford Canning, or Russophobes, like Sir Henry Rawlinson, or a combination of the two. Stratford Canning (Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe), for example, had raised the Circassian question for discussion in the House of Lords in June 1864, and Mr. H. Seymour had likewise raised the issue in the House of Commons in the July. It was an issue that attracted British interest closely.

Concerns were voiced in political circles about Russia's subjugation of the Caucasus, which had opened up room and resources for expansion further into Central Asia, which ultimately threatened British trading influence in Persia, and also her own imperial interests in India. This might explain the emphasis on conditions at Trabzon in British consular reports as it was particularly important for British trade routes to Persia. Ultimately, the preservation of the Ottoman Empire itself tended to be a British strategy, given its importance for British imports and exports, and for the balance of power in Europe against not just the Russians but also the Austrian Empire and the Prussians.

Apart from the political concerns over the expansion of the Russian Empire, general public sympathy was also stimulated for the Circassians following numerous updates in

the Press about their suffering. In 1862 this was added to by a Circassian delegation visiting the United Kingdom in the hope of gaining British assistance. They visited major cities up and down the country, including London, Manchester, Edinburgh and Dundee, raising awareness of their plight among the British public. This had even led to public lobbying of government for the Circassian cause, for example when the ‘Dundee Foreign Affairs Committee’ had written to Earl Russell to ask why the British government had decided not to interfere on behalf of the Circassians.⁸⁶ Those people of Dundee who had received the Circassian delegation in a public meeting expressed a unanimous vote of sympathy for the people of Circassia.⁸⁷ A “young gentleman” from Edinburgh wrote in to the *Dundee Advertiser* expressing his willingness to take up arms for the Circassian cause against the Russians due to his “innate sense of horror and detestation of despotism and oppression”, claiming he was ready to leave the country at a moment’s notice.⁸⁸

With the Highland Clearances still fresh in the minds of many, the Circassian issue seems to have generated particular sympathy in Scotland. One frustrated letter sent in to *The Scotsman* reflects this sentiment: “The Scotchmen whose ancestors fought and bled for their national liberty over and over, are they to meet and talk and do nothing at the call of both freedom and humanity, or instead of being first, to be last? If they are, they are unworthy of the blessings they themselves enjoy... why not call a public meeting, and appoint a committee to receive contributions?”⁸⁹ Coverage on this issue was given

⁸⁶ In fact, the British had been involved in Circassia in an unofficial capacity in an attempt to unite the tribes in resistance against the Russians; however, this was not something that could be openly admitted to.

⁸⁷ ‘The Circassian Chiefs at Dundee’, *The Times*, October 27, 1862, p.7.

⁸⁸ Reproduced in ‘Practical Sympathy with the Circassians’, *The Scotsman*, October 30, 1862, p.2.

⁸⁹ ‘Relief to the Circassians’, *The Scotsman*, May 16, 1864, p.6.

regular attention by *The Scotsman*, and updates on the activities of the Circassian Aid Committee in London were published.

The Ottoman Empire on this occasion had won a moral victory over the Russians in the eyes of the British, being seen as the humanitarian element in the equation. It is interesting to note that within a decade, opinion on the Ottoman Circassians had done a complete turn-around in the wake of their alleged involvement in the suppression of the Bulgarian uprising.

4.ii The Circassian Aid Committee

The frustrations expressed by the public over the Circassian exodus were also felt at a political level, particularly when the British government had not been able to agree with the Ottomans on the terms of a loan for the relief effort. Inspired by earlier collections, such as one that had been made by Mrs. Hornby, wife of the British Consular Judge in Istanbul, to bring food and clothing to the refugees, the Circassian Aid Committee was formed in May 1864 in order to collect donations from the British public. Interestingly, the Committee was headed by Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, and the names of other former consuls who had either served in Russia or in the Ottoman Empire could be identified, including the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Honourable Arthur Kinnaird, MP, Sir Henry Rawlinson, and a Mr. Laurence Oliphant.⁹⁰ Laurence Oliphant, for his part, wanted to be involved in the relief effort as he believed that the British shouldered some

⁹⁰ 'The Circassian Exiles', *The Times*, May 27, 1864, p.9.

of the responsibility for the Circassian exodus by allowing the Russians to rebuild their fortresses in Circassia following the Crimean War.

The Circassian Aid Committee enlisted the services of Dr Millingen, who would become the Quarantine Officer at Trabzon, to distribute the collected funds appropriately among the refugees in Istanbul. Dr Millingen's regular updates to the Committee were published in the Press in the hope that more support would be attracted by his accounts of the refugees' suffering. Contributions were sent over as soon as they came in, "since every pound sent at once may save a life".⁹¹ As word spread that the Committee had been formed, private letters from eye-witnesses were also sent to the Press for publication, expressing support for the initiative.

At a public meeting held by the Circassian Aid Committee in London in an effort to drum up sympathy, loud cheers were made at every expression of disapproval of Russian conduct. Only one brave individual had stood up to comment that Russia was no longer Britain's enemy. In the end, the exposure given by the Committee to such openly Russophobic sentiments was perhaps its undoing. It did not manage to collect the level of donations it had hoped for, and brought its activities to a close in March 1865. However, in total it had collected £2,067⁹², most of which was spent in Istanbul on the provision of mattresses, blankets and pillows for the worse off of the orphans recently housed there. The remainder was spent on clothing and woollens.⁹³

⁹¹ 'The Circassian Exodus', *The Times*, June 13, 1864, p.10.

⁹² 'The Circassian Exodus', *The Times*, April 3, 1865, p.9.

⁹³ A Letter from Laurence Oliphant to the Editor, in 'The Circassian Exodus', *The Times*, August 5, 1864, p.7.

The Circassian Aid Committee provides an example of the extent of public and political sympathy felt. By 1865, however, public attention was diverted to other issues, and the British initiatives on behalf of the Circassians were confined to the activities of the consular staff on the ground. The Committee is also in itself an interesting side-story to the Circassian refugee crisis and helps to provide more of a context to the British consular reactions.

4.iii Consular Responses

The responses of the British consulates in the Black Sea ports were in many respects those of any other local residents, in terms of playing the role of observer, making contributions on occasion to the relief effort, and also by succumbing to the same illnesses. However, the consuls did also play specific roles, notably by contributing to the raising of joint municipalities, by mediating between refugees and the Porte or between the Porte and the British government, and by advising the Ottoman authorities on resettlement strategies for the refugees.

The consular brief was ultimately to promote British trading interests, but many consuls found themselves going well beyond the call of duty. One example of this was in the despatching of petitions from the Circassian refugees. One was sent in April 1864 to Queen Victoria seeking the help of the British government to drive the Russians out of the Circassian territories, or in providing them with safe passage to the Ottoman

Empire.⁹⁴ A second petition was drawn up by the Abkhazian refugees in 1867 who wanted to protest against the forcible detention of some of their number by the Russians. The help of the British consul in Trabzon, Sir Gifford Palgrave, was solicited particularly because his previous posting had been among the Abkhazians and so he was familiar with them. Palgrave, who had a very hands-on approach to his office, went out of his way to verify the information, which included cross-checking the Russian and Ottoman shipping records on the Abkhazian transports, and presented the petition to the Governor of Trabzon, for it then to be passed on to the Russian government by an Ottoman representative at the Porte.⁹⁵

Other acts of mediation included the efforts made by Sir Henry Bulwer, the British Ambassador in Istanbul to procure a British loan of £1.5million to help the Ottomans with the proper transportation, care, and resettlement of the refugees. When this fell through, another request by the Grand Vizier for help with the supply of British steamers to transport the refugees was also mediated by Sir Henry Bulwer. Eventually, the British government did contribute £5,000 to be spent on the humanitarian effort as Sir Henry Bulwer saw fit, and this money paid for the provision of hundreds of tons of biscuits to the refugees in Istanbul and on their voyage from Samsun to Küstendji. Finally, Consul Palgrave in Trabzon noted that both he and Dr Millingen had to apply “some friendly but vigilant superintendence” in order to prevent abuses being made by the local governor over the lodging and transport of refugees.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ See Appendix I for a full text of this petition.

⁹⁵ See Appendix II for a full text of this petition.

⁹⁶ No.39 From Palgrave, August 1, 1867, FO 97/424.

Sir Henry Bulwer had even proposed a rather cynical resettlement policy to the Porte, suggesting the settlement of the Circassians into military-style colonies in eastern Anatolia to perform the role of border guard against Russian expansion,⁹⁷ a policy which the Ottomans appear to have taken up in part. Therefore, a number of interesting observations can be made about the work of foreign consular officials in the Ottoman Empire during such times of emergency, and how they worked alongside their Ottoman colleagues either in an active or advisory capacity.

Unfortunately, the crisis did exact a heavy toll on the foreign consular officials who came into contact with the refugees, especially those stationed in the Black Sea port towns. As early as 1862, Consul Barker in Samsun complained of having contracted ‘Samsoun fever’⁹⁸, he had to take regular leaves of absence, and requested removal to a healthier consulate. The Swedish Vice-Consul who had taken over his duties while he was away, had contracted typhus and died. Barker’s predecessor had also become ill and been reposted to Crete. Eventually, the consulate at Samsun seems to have been abandoned altogether and responsibility for the port was given to Trabzon.

In Varna, too, Consul Suter fell ill and had to take extended leave of absence; he eventually died in May 1864. His successor, St Clair, also had to take leave due to ill-health, and a similar situation was happening in Küstendji. This might explain why the British consulates in Ottoman Europe were also reorganised in 1865 and both Varna and Küstendji were put under the authority of Rustchuk.

⁹⁷ No.7 From Sir Henry Bulwer, May 3, 1864, FO 881/1259.

⁹⁸ No.3 From Barker, April 28, 1862, FO 78/1691.

Finally in Trabzon, Consul Stevens, who for about a decade had expended so much time and energy on the Circassian refugee crisis – and who at one point had refugees staying in his front garden – seems to have had a mental breakdown from the experience. In June 1867 he was declared to be of “unsound mind” and replaced by Sir Gifford Palgrave.⁹⁹ In the end, consular staff were equally in danger of contracting the diseases brought by the Circassians, often had to work in under-resourced and difficult situations to fulfil the requirements of their posts, and they suffered their own casualties from the crisis.

⁹⁹ No.3 From Palgrave, June 11, 1867, FO 78/1989.

Conclusions

The aim of this study has been to provide a more comprehensive picture of the initial landings and experiences of the Circassian refugees in the Ottoman domains, as well as of the Ottoman experiences of them, by considering a number of different angles and by attempting to synthesise the various research materials available. Its reliance on contemporary British accounts, although potentially problematic due to the limited scope and possible bias, has nevertheless helped to identify inconsistent areas in existing scholarship and to raise questions about the reliability of accepted wisdom on this area of history; and these sources have been useful in determining alternative perspectives. It is hoped that this research will also have highlighted some of the details that have not so far been given too much scholarly attention, such as evidence of public sympathy and philanthropy directed towards the Circassians.

The sources have also opened up some interesting questions and possible new angles for future research, and go some way towards answering them. For instance, by considering the massive organisational feat that the transporting of refugees from Circassia to Ottoman ports, and then in some cases the trans-shipping of tens of thousands of them within the course of a matter of days, we can question whether the Ottoman response was quite so inefficient as historians like Marc Pinson have suggested.

Likewise, we can ask why the Ottomans were quite so unprepared for the Circassians given their not insignificant experience with the Tatar emigrations, and why they

continued to settle these refugees when they had neither the resources nor the manpower to accommodate them, and whether this very fact might hint at evidence of some longer term plan for the refugees. To the first question, the simple answer is that the Ottomans just did not expect the Circassians to arrive in such massive numbers, and had no real advance warning. Secondly, because for much of the time the Circassian exodus backed on to the Tatar exodus, and in many cases they overlapped, there was no time for planning; in many ways they should really be treated as the same movement. In fact, there is evidence of the Ottomans negotiating with the Russians to regulate the emigration, but controls on the exodus at the Russian end – at least, in the initial stages – were not forthcoming, and in fact there is a suggestion that it was continually encouraged. Ultimately, by the time the refugees had landed on the Ottoman doorstep, there was not an awful lot that could be done other than attempt to deal with the aftershock.

In terms of the resettlement period, although not technically part of this study, it is interesting to observe in passing that the British consular accounts, while admitting to some disorderly conduct, do also raise questions over whether the Circassians were quite so unruly as they have traditionally been portrayed, at the very least showing that Circassian reactions to the localities where they were settled probably varied according to the treatment they had received and the environments in which they found themselves.

Ultimately, we have to ask whether the Circassian refugees proved to be a blessing or a curse for the Ottomans. Apart from the initial strain felt by the provincial economies and their local communities, the refugee crisis also had severe financial consequences for the

Ottoman Empire, leading them to default on their loan repayments in the early-1870s. However, in the longer term, there is evidence that the Circassians did produce some benefits for the Ottomans. They contributed towards the modernisation of the Empire, with many of them working on the construction of the new roads and railways. The reforms of provincial government, with their emphasis on improving efficiency and on the facilitation of public works and institutions, were also at least in part likely to have been introduced at this stage as a result of the refugee crisis. The increase in manpower was valuable in the extension of the armed forces and in the provision of provincial policing, however problematic.

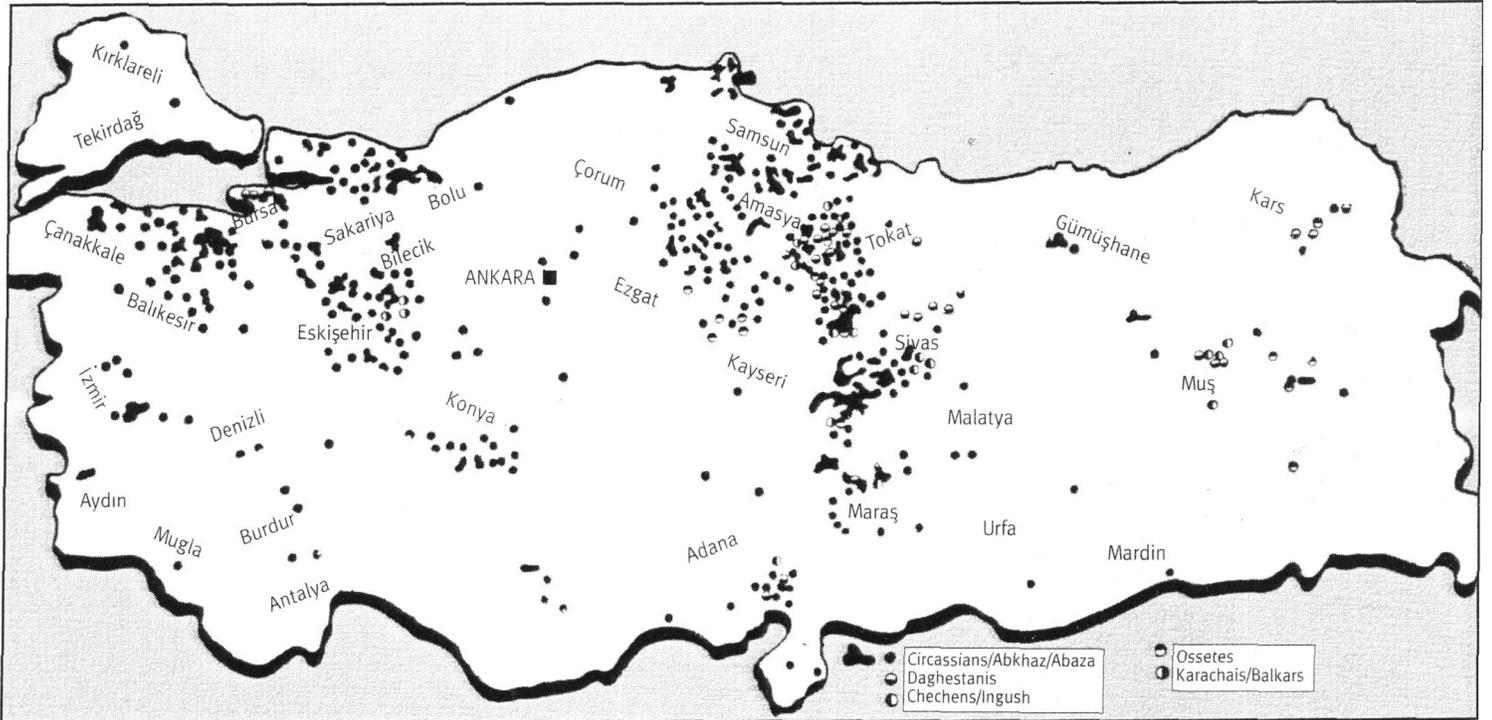
Contrary to the findings of some commentators on this subject, the Circassians showed themselves to be skilled agriculturalists, helping in the introduction of new machinery and cultivation methods, and for the most part developing flourishing settlements out of previously uncultivated land.

These conclusions show that the Circassian exodus to the Ottoman territories produced a variety of both positive and negative effects. It is hard to determine which of these effects had the more substantial impact, but it does seem clear that the Circassian presence was not the absolutely detrimental one that has often been implied.

Finally, looking at the reports and accounts of contemporary British observers provides a good example of how foreign consulates in the Ottoman Empire worked alongside each other, as well as with the local administrations and communities, especially in emergency

situations like this. It also shows an example of the multi-national nature of the response to Ottoman problems that seems to have typified the late-nineteenth century. Lastly, it shows that Ottoman emergencies were not simply felt by ‘Ottomans’ but also by the various communities who were resident in the Empire. The articles and letters printed in the British Press reflect the position of British public and political opinion at this time, which on the one hand help to explain the active contributions that British consular staff made towards the Ottoman Circassian problem, but it is also interesting in itself to see the complete volte-face made by British opinion only a decade later on the Bulgarian question.

The sources looked at have thrown up new angles on existing scholarship, and have also shown hints of completely untold stories as yet, particularly concerning Ottoman civil society. It would be interesting to see what else might be discovered about this period were more comprehensive research to be done across the various source materials currently available. By concentrating on the eye-witness accounts of British observers, and looking at the various facets of the British experience of the refugee crisis, it has helped to bring the period alive as some sense of the level of chaos and desperation that was felt in the ports comes across in their accounts. Ultimately, these sources provide us with an alternative contemporary perspective on events, which is important for seeing the wider picture, and in many cases with this subject in particular they are important for filling in the gaps.



Circassian settlements (including Abaza and Abkhaz) in modern Turkey.

(Source: Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook*, page 24)

Illustrations of the Circassian Exodus



(Source: www.circassianworld.com)

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Internet Sites

www.circassianworld.com

Appendix I:

A Petition from Circassian leaders to Her Majesty Queen Victoria

“Our most humble Petition to Her Magnificent Majesty the Queen and Emperor of England is to the effect that –

It is now more than eighty years since the Russian Government is unlawfully striving to subdue and annex to its dominions Circassia, which since the creation of the world has been our home and our country. It slaughters like sheep the children, helpless women, and old men that fall into its hands. It rolls about their heads with the bayonet like melons, and there is no act of oppression or cruelty which is beyond the pale of civilisation and humanity, and which defies description, that it has not committed. We have not, from father to son, at the cost of our lives and properties, refrained from opposing the tyrannical acts of that Government in defence of our country, which is dearer to us than our lives. But during the last year or two it has taken advantage of a famine caused by a drought with which the Almighty visited us, as well as by its own ravages, and it has occasioned us great distress by its severe attacks by sea and land. Many are the lives which have been lost in battle, from hunger in the mountains, from destitution on the sea-coast, and from want of skill at sea.

We therefore invoke the mediation and precious assistance of the British Government and people – the guardian of humanity and centre of justice – in order to repel the brutal

attacks of the Russian Government on our country, and save our country and our nation together.

But if it is not possible to afford this help for the preservation of our country, and race, then we pray to be afforded facilities for removing to a place of safety our helpless and miserable children and women that are perishing by the brutal attacks of the enemy as well as by the effects of famine; and if neither of these two requests are taken into consideration, and if in our helpless condition we are utterly annihilated notwithstanding our appeals to the mercy and grace of the Governments, then we shall not cease to invoke our right in the presence of the Lord of the Universe, of Him who has confided to Your Majesty sovereignty, strength, and power for the purpose of protecting the weak.

We beg Your Excellency [Sir Henry Bulwer] to be the medium of making known to the great British Government and to the glorious British nation our condition of helplessness and misery, and we have therefore ventured to present to Your Excellency our most humble petition. A copy of it has been submitted to the Sultan's Government and to the Embassies of other Powers.

Signed by the People of Circassia

29 Sheval, 1280 (April 9, 1864)

Enclosed in Despatch No.3 From Sir Henry Bulwer to Earl Russell, Constantinople, April 12, 1864 (FO 881/1259)

Appendix II:

A Petition from the Abkhazian refugees to Mukhlis Pasha, Governor of Trabzon, regarding the forcible detention of Abkhazians by the Russians

“We, the undersigned, address this our Petition to His Excellency Mukhlis Pasha, that it may be by him transmitted to the Government at Constantinople; in the view that suitable representations may thence be made to the Russian Government demanding the execution of the Convention made between the Russian Government and the Porte; and according to which Convention the Abkhasians, to the number of four thousand five hundred families were to be sent into Turkish territory. Now up to this moment only one thousand five hundred families have been so sent; the remainder have by the Russian Government been hindered from following. This conduct has occasioned intolerable misery; since in consequence of such division of families, and the retention of so many in Abkhasia, wives have in many instances been shipped off for Turkey while their husbands have been detained in Russia; mothers have been sent hither without their children, and children without their mothers, and the like.

Now since the Government of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan has been pleased to accept us, we have come hither, and we count for nothing the loss of our lands and of our goods; only this division and ruin of our families and this forced separation from our own children is more than we can bear. The Russians are over-powerful, and we are utterly disheartened.

We demand accordingly that the families and the individuals now kept behind, may be set at liberty to follow and rejoin their country-people and relatives.”

Signed Shereem Beg, Marshian

and 23 other chiefs each by name

8th Rebia'-ul-Awwal, AH1284 (July 10 1867)

Enclosed in Despatch No.32 From Consul Palgrave to Lord Lyons, Trebizond, July 14, 1867 (FO 97/424)

Appendix III:

Report to the Board of Health of the Ottoman Empire, Samsun, May 20, 1864

“Gentlemen – I arrived at Samsun six days ago. No words are adequate to describe the situation in which I found the town and the unfortunate immigrants. Besides the Circassians (from 8,000 to 10,000) heaped up in the khans, the ruinous buildings, and stables of the city, upwards of 30,000 individuals, coming from the encampment at Irmak and Dervend, encumber the squares, obstruct the streets, invade enclosed grounds, penetrate everywhere, remain stationed there during the whole day, and retire only late after sunset. Everywhere you meet with the sick, the dying, and the dead; on the threshold of gates in front of shops, in the middle of streets, in the squares, in the gardens, at the foot of trees. Every dwelling, every corner of the streets, every spot occupied by the immigrants, has become a hotbed of infection. A warehouse on the sea-side, a few steps distant from the quarantine-office, hardly affording space enough for 30 persons, enclosed till the day before yesterday 207 individuals, all sick or dying. I undertook to empty this hotbed of pestilence. Even the porters refused to venture in the interior of this horrible hole, out of which, assisted by my worthy colleague Aly Effendy, I drew several corpses in a state of putrefaction. This fact may convey a faint idea of the deplorable state of the immigrants whom they have allowed to take up their abode in town. What I saw at Trebizond will not admit of comparison with the frightful spectacle which the town of Samsun exhibits.

The encampments present a picture hardly less revolting. From 40,000 to 50,000 individuals in the most absolute state of destitution, preyed upon by disease, decimated by death, are cast there without shelter, without bread, and without sepulture.

I found the Mutessarif dismayed, and altogether at a loss how to act in such an emergency. Atta Bey is without money and credit; he has not got enough to pay the men who remove the dead. In the market nothing is given him except for ready money, not even a few yards of longcloth for winding-sheets. There is no one to take care of the immigrants, no service organized for the burial of the dead, no horses, no carts, no boats, nothing.

I considered it essential at once to devise means to feed the immigrants, the greater number of whom had received nothing for several days. I had recourse to several corn-dealers, more especially to Mr. Serkiz Kirorkian. I put them in relation with the Mutessarif, and it is on the flour they supplied that we are living. Ismail Bey, whom I brought with me, takes care that 50 drachms of bread be given daily to each of the immigrants. I obtained, also, some Indian corn-flour, and it is out of these scanty means that we have been able to afford some relief to these 70,000 to 80,000 exiles.

My next care has been to organize a service for the removal of the dead. For this I had recourse to the chest of the quarantine office, wherein I found a few hundreds of piastres. I then took steps for the evacuation of the town, and the landing of the Circassians I had detained on board the 11 ships and the seven cutters lying in the harbour. All the

passengers were landed at Kumjuzah, a few miles distant from the town. To this place I sent 3,000 or 4,000 individuals I have during the last three days extracted from the dens they filled in the city. The evacuation is progressing, but the funds of the chest will soon have been exhausted.

The question which we have to deal with is absolute deficiency of money and of a police force. Government must make haste to send these pecuniary supplies, as well as a body of police, in order to avoid disturbances. There are at present here from 70,000 to 80,000 individuals without bread, and there is no one to keep them down in case of disorderly conduct. I wish it were possible that his Highness the Grand Vizier could come here and witness the spectacle which this ill-fated town and the encampments present.

I am fully aware that it is not easy for the Turkish Government to transport quickly elsewhere so large a population; but it is the Government alone that is able to come to the assistance of the Mutessarif, by sending him the sum necessary for the maintenance of the immigrants. With money the town and the Irmak will be evacuated; the immigrants may be kept in healthy camps either at Kumjuzah or Dervend; clothing, linen, soap will be readily purchased, supplies of provisions be secured. I once more repeat it, there are here between 70,000 and 80,000 immigrants. In a few days hence this number will be doubled. How is it expected that such a mass of men should be kept in order? How is it to be fed and provided for? This immigration thus left to itself is an actual calamity.

There are in the harbour from 10 to 20 large vessels, which I sought to employ in transporting about 10,000 Circassians to Bujuk Liman, at the mouth of the Bosphorus. Want of funds has obliged me to postpone their departure.

I conclude by stating that the Mutessarif is without any money. There are between 70,000 and 80,000 people needing their daily bread, and that if we had here an adequate supply of flour the number of ovens would be insufficient; we need biscuits. There are individuals who die from starvation, and the number of those who have been four days without receiving their rations is very large.”

The Sanitary Inspector on Service, Barozzi

Reproduced in 'The Circassian Exodus', The Times, June 13, 1864, page 10.

Appendix IV:

Methodology of the Primary Sources

The main limitation with this study with regard to the primary sources used is that, due to practical reasons as well as the need to impose some limitations on research given the restricted scope of the dissertation, they have been confined to a selection of records from the British Foreign Office Archives, and to articles found in a small section of the contemporary British Press (namely, *The Times*, *The Scotsman*, and *The Manchester Guardian*, with the latter two mainly looked at for the purposes of comparison). Unfortunately, I was not able at this stage to look at Ottoman or Russian sources, or at the consular correspondence of other countries, all of which will have thrown more light on the course of events, for example those of France and Austria. Likewise, with the contemporary Press coverage.

The Foreign Office archives were searched between the dates of 1858 and 1870 under the names of the principal Ottoman Black Sea ports, including a brief look at Constantinople too, and I also performed a search specifically for despatches concerning the Circassian question. *The Times* and *The Scotsman* were both searched comprehensively under the same search criteria, also expanded to include general updates on the Ottoman Empire, and to search for mention of specific Circassian tribes (e.g. Ubykh, Abkhazian, and so on). *The Times* was concentrated on particularly because they had had a foreign correspondent observing events on the ground and because their archives have been comprehensively indexed, making it quicker to search for material. *The Scotsman* was

looked at because they have made their digital archive available online and so searching was far easier, and also because they printed a number of private letters from eye-witnesses to the events in question, as well as extracts from the *Levant Herald*, a paper based in Istanbul. The British Library newspaper archives unfortunately do not hold copies of the *Levant Herald* for this period and so it was not possible to look at these firsthand. *The Manchester Guardian* was looked at only briefly, largely in order to consider events from a different political spectrum, however, coverage on the Circassian question was very limited. I did not have time to look at the archives of *The Morning Post*, at other journals or any of the European Press, but all of these could be expected to demonstrate some useful material.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that I was not able to do a complete survey of consular records for all the various regions and issues that one would need to consider to gain a fuller picture of events. Other British records that might yield some interesting information for future researchers include those of the Board of Trade, the Colonial Office, the Cabinet Office, the Houses of Parliament, and also those of the India Office (where some attention may have been paid to this issue due to British concerns about Russian expansion towards India).