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PRINCES CHERKASSKII OR CIRCASSIAN MURZAS

The Kabardians in the Russian boyar elite 1560-1700

The non-Russian peoples of Russia usually appear in the works of historians beginning with the time of Peter the Great. There are a few exceptions to this rule, primarily as the result of the studies of Andreas Kappeler, who called to the attention of Russian historians to the various peoples of the Volga region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹ Yet even Kappeler, like most historians of nationality issues in later eras, wrote within the framework of what might be called center-periphery relations. Historians normally look at the history of a given people in its native environment, its ethnography and economy, and then study the policy of the Russian central government towards people more or less on the periphery of the empire. This is also the main perspective of studies of nationality in the imperial and Soviet eras.² The history of Russian imperial expansion to the west and south, important in itself, naturally keeps the focus on the periphery.³

1. Andreas Kappeler, *Rußlands erste Nationalitäten. Das Zarenreich und die Völker der Mittleren Wolga vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne-Vienna, 1982) (Beiträge zur Geschichte Osteuropas, 14).

2. See for example Edward Thaden, *Russia's Western borderlands 1710-1870* (Princeton, NJ, 1984); Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and state in late imperial Russia: Nationalism and russification on the Western frontier 1863-1914* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); A. I. Miller, "Ukrainskii vopros" v politike vlastei i ruskom obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraia polovina XIX v.) (St. Petersburg, 2000); Yurii Slezkine, *Arctic mirrors: Russia and the small peoples of the North* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Terry Martin, *The affirmative action empire: Nation and nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY, 2001).

3. Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's steppe frontier: The making of a colonial empire 1500-1800* (Bloomington, IN, 2002).

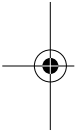


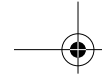
The center-periphery perspective omits an important dimension of “nationality relations” in the Russian state, the role of the non-Russians in the Russian elite. Their role is essentially a non-subject in the literature for the whole period of Russian and Soviet history. For the pre-revolutionary era Andreas Kappeler devoted a few pages in his survey of Russian nationalities and policies, but the only work to address the issue remains that of D. C. B. Lieven on the Council of State at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lieven noted that some 20% of the Russian empire’s elite were non-Russians, and that by a yardstick (as he points out) that minimizes the numbers by a very narrow definition of non-Russian. Anecdotally historians know about the large numbers of Germans — most of them from the Baltic provinces — in the government of the nineteenth century, the Benckendorffs, Lievens, Nesselrodes, Kankrins. David Saunders reminded us of the Ukrainians, Kochubei, Bezborodko, Paskevich, and Miloradovich. There are others: the Finland-Swedish nobility and the absolutely crucial and rarely mentioned Poles.⁴

For the earlier centuries of Russian history, non-Russians among the ruling elite are virtually invisible. Historians of those ages are aware that many boyars came from Lithuania, the Tatar Khanates, the Nogais, and the Circassians but the assumption is always that of instant assimilation. They figure in the narrative like any other Russian boyars. Only recently have Janet Martin and A. L. Khoroshkevich called attention to the Tatars serving in the Russian army and state, some of them in quite high positions. Martin has also noted that, at least until the 1580’s, they were by no means all converts to Orthodoxy. Some of them remained Muslims while serving the Russian tsars for a generation.⁵ Her conclusion, that religious identity was not the sole factor determining admission into Russian society, ceased to be actual after the end of the sixteenth century. All members of the ruling elite after that point were Orthodox until Peter’s time. Acceptance of Orthodoxy, however, did not imply the submergence of national identity. The Circassian princes, major political figures, relatives of the Romanov tsars, and the single richest boyar clan in the country, constituted a distinct

4. D. C. B. Lieven, *Russia’s rulers under the Old Regime* (New Haven, 1989): 31-36; Andreas Kappeler, *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall* (Munich, 1992): 108-117, 247-249; L. E. Gorizontov, *Paradoksy imperskoi politiki: poliaki v Rossii i russkie v Pol’she* (Moscow, 1999); and David Saunders, *The Ukrainian impact on Russian culture 1750-1850* (Edmonton, Alberta, 1985).

5. Janet Martin, “Multiethnicity in Muscovy: A consideration of the Christian and Muslim Tatars in the 1550s-1580s,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, 5, 1 (2001): 1-23; and A. L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus’ i Krym: ot soiuza k protivostoianiiia (konets XV — nachalo XVI vv.)* (Moscow, 2001): 272-313. See also S. P. Mordvinova, “Sluzhilye kniaz’ia v kontse XVI veka,” *Trudy moskovskogo istoriko-arkhivnogo instituta*, 28 (Moscow, 1970): 326-340. Standard works on the boyar elite touch the issue barely if at all: Robert O. Crummey, *Aristocrats and servitors: The boyar elite in Russia 1613-1689* (Princeton, NJ, 1983); and André Berelowitch, *La hiérarchie des égaux: La noblesse russe d’Ancien Régime xv^e-xvii^e siècles* (Paris, 2001). For the role of the Lithuanians see Cherie Woodworth, “The Tsar’s descent from Caesar: Clans, genealogy, mythmaking, and statehood in Russia 1400-1550” (Yale University PhD dissertation, 2001); and M. M. Krom, *Mezh Rus’iu i Litvoi: Zapadnorusskie zemli v sisteme russko-litovskikh otnoshenii kontsa XV — pervoi poloviny XVI v.* (Moscow, 1995).





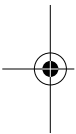
group in the Russian elite of the seventeenth century that maintained at least some Circassian traditions and identity.

The Circassians in the Russian elite

The core of the Russian elite consisted of the men of *duma* rank, some twenty or thirty of them at any one time in the sixteenth century, more in the seventeenth century. Until the 1590's the non-Russian aristocrats composed a small group of "service princes," *sluzhilye kniaz'ia*. Usually they did not have *duma* rank, at least in the first generation. This does not mean that they were not politically important. The fundamental and path-breaking work of A. A. Zimin, Gustave Alef, Nancy Kollmann, and others on the ruling has been focussed on the full *duma*.⁶ The narrative of events, however, reveals occasional political figures of major importance before the 1590's who did not have *duma* rank. One such figure was Prince Mikhail L'vovich Glinskii. Glinskii was an Orthodox prince of Tatar origin (the official genealogy made him a descendent of Mamai and in the female line from Chingis Khan) from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, with his base in today's northeastern Ukraine, who came to Russia in 1508 with his brothers Ivan and Vasilii. Imprisoned in 1514 after an apparent attempt to return to Lithuania, he was released early in 1527 after the marriage of his niece Elena to Vasilii III. He remained an important figure at court until his death in 1536. Though he was the uncle of Ivan the Terrible's mother, he never became a boyar. Other emigrants from Lithuania, like the princes Odoevskii or Trubetskoi, also remained without *duma* rank until the end of the century.⁷ The Tatar *tsarevichi*, mainly those from the ruling

6. A. A. Zimin, "Sostav boiarskoi dumy v XV-XVI vekakh," in *Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1957 god* (Moscow, 1958): 41-87; Gustave Alef, *The origins of Muscovite autocracy in the reign of Ivan III* (Wiesbaden, 1986) (Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte, 39); Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Kinship and politics: The making of the Muscovite political system 1345-1547* (Stanford, CA, 1987); A. P. Pavlov, *Gosudarev dvor i politicheskai bor'ba pri Borise Godunove (1584-1605 gg.)* (St. Petersburg, 1992).

7. S. P. Mordovina, "Sluzhilye," *art. cit.*: 327-328; M. E. Bychkova, *Sostav klassa feodalov Rossii v XVI v.: Istoriko-genealogicheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow, 1986): 52-69; M. M. Krom, *Mezh Rus'iu i Litvoi, op. cit.*: 107-119; Sergei Bogatyrev, *The sovereign and his counsellors: Ritualised consultations in Muscovite political culture 1350s-1570s* (Helsinki, 2000): 125-135 (Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia, Humaniora, 307); A. A. Zimin, *Rossia na poroge novogo vremeni: Ocherki politicheskoi istorii Rossii pervoi treti XVI v.* (Moscow, 1972): 153-155, 160-167, 298, 313-314, 364-366, 392-395. Glinskii was imprisoned in August, 1534, another victim of the factional struggles during the regency in the youth of Ivan IV: A. A. Zimin, *Reformy Ivana Groznogo: Ocherki sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi i politicheskoi istorii Rossii sere diny XVI v.* (Moscow, 1960): 225-227; N. S. Kollmann, *Kinship, op. cit.*: 207. Zimin placed the Glinskiis among "serving princes of Southwestern Rus'," never mentioning their Tatar roots: A. A. Zimin, *Formirovanie boiarskoi aristokratii v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XV- pervoi treti XVI v.* (Moscow, 1988): 142-143. The genealogical texts current in Russia into the seventeenth century describe the Glinskiis' Tatar ancestry: "Rodoslovnaia kniga po trem spiskam," *Vremennik Obshchestva istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh*, 10 (Moscow, 1851) [hereafter *Vestnik O IDR*, 10], 195-196; "Rodoslovnaia keleinaia kniga sviateishego Gosudaria Filareta Nikiticha Patriarkha vseia Rossii," *Iubileinyi sbornik imp. S.-Peterburgskogo arkheologicheskogo instituta 1613-1913* (St. Petersburg, 1913): 43-49; M. E. Bychkova,





dynasty of Astrakhan', also failed to acquire boyar rank but played important roles in the army and in administration. The Tatar *tsarevichi*, however, even when they adopted Orthodoxy and married into Russian aristocratic clans, never acquired the prominence of the Circassians, and faded out in the course of the seventeenth century. The Circassians lasted from 1561 into the time of Peter the Great and beyond, and were politically far more important during that period than the Tatar *tsarevichi*. The Circassians were the most important in large part because they were the only ones to repeatedly intermarry with the ruling dynasties.

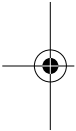
The Circassians were not an obscure people. Today they form a group of peoples inhabiting the north Caucasus, numbering something over half a million.⁸ They are scattered among three Russian local republics, Kabardino-Balkaria in the center of the Caucasus range and to the North West the Adyge and the Karachai-Cherkess republics, between the Kuban and the Caucasus. This pattern of settlement and government is the product of two events. One is the outmigration of the western Circassian tribes in the 1860's under Russian pressure, and the other the Soviet decision in the 1920's to make three Circassian districts. The Soviets did not just cynically divide a united nation: the three groups are separated by other inhabitants and the self-consciousness of the Circassians was intensely local. The western Circassian groups also had a different history from Kabarda, providing most of the opposition to the Russians and most of the out-migrants, in contrast to the more stable Kabarda. Of the two western Circassian units, Karachai-Cherkessia adopted Kabardian Circassian as its literary language, while the smaller Adyge republic to the northeast stuck to the local dialect. Kabarda itself is smaller than it was in the sixteenth century, for it extended then well into northern Chechnia. At that time the Russians, apparently reflecting local usage, referred to today's Kabarda, the land of the "Five mountains" or Piatigor'e as Bol'shaia Kabarda, and to the eastern extension, now northern Chechnia between the Sunzha and Terek Rivers, as Malaia Kabarda.⁹

Today's map conceals the important historic fact that the history of the north Caucasus, from the fourteenth century onwards to the 1860's, is mainly the history of the rise and fall of Circassian hegemony. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Circassia supplied most of the slave-soldiers of the Mameluke dynasty of Egypt that took power as sultans in 1382. The Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517 did not displace the Circassians, leaving the Mameluke system more or less intact under Ottoman overlordship. The Circassians, together with Georgians and Armenians, played a similar role in Safavid Iran. From about 1550 to the end of the dynasty they

"Rodoslovie Glinskikh iz rumiantsevskogo sobraniia," *Zapiski otdela rukopisei gos. Biblioteki im. Lenina* (Moscow, 1977): 104-125. Iakovenko places the Glinskiis among families of "Turkic" origin: N. M. Iakovenko, *Ukrains'ka shliakhta z kintsia XIV do seredyiny XVII st. (Volyn' i Tsentral'na Ukraina)* (Kiev, 1993): 326-329.

8. The official figure from 1989 is about 560,000: V. A. Mikhailov, ed., *Chto nuzhno znat' o narodakh Rossii: Spravochnik dlia gosudarstvennykh sluzhashchikh* (Moscow, 1999): 187-192, 216-236, 557-558.

9. Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: a handbook* (London, 2001): 53; V. S. Beslaneev, *Malaia Kabarda (XIII-nachalo XX veka)* (Nal'chik, 1995).





were a major component of the *ghulam*, the slave-soldiers of the Shah and in the harem, playing a major political role in both capacities.¹⁰

The sixteenth century Circassian tribes were the masters of the north Caucasus, with the Chechens, Balkars, Karachais, and Ossetians who figure so prominently on the modern map all playing a very subordinate role. Only Dagestan remained outside their control, with its local rulers and a Persian fort in Derbent. It was the gradual establishment of Crimean hegemony through the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, and then of Russian rule after 1800, that brought Circassian hegemony to an end, and thus other people (such as the Chechens) came to the fore.¹¹

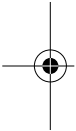
Circassian society was dominated in this period by a series of ruling dynasties whose leaders the Russians styled princes (*kniaz*) or, following Tatar usage, *murza*, both presumably reflecting the Circassian *pshi*. The four great princes of Kabarda were the most powerful in the sixteenth century, dominating the central Caucasus range. The tribes to their west seem to have been under their power to some extent until the Crimeans began to exert control beginning in the 1590's. The princes ruled over a people speaking a language of the Caucasian group related to Georgian and Chechen, divided among many tribes. Circassian society was highly articulated, with a substantial minority of nobles (*uzden*), ruling over commoners and bondsmen of various types. They practiced a combination of agriculture and animal husbandry. Cattle and horses were the most important, followed by sheep. In religion they were Islamic, though remnants of both earlier animism and Christianity were strong until the eighteenth century, when Muslim missionaries from Crimea were able to spread and deepen Islam in the mountains.¹²

Thus it was not to an unimportant people that Ivan IV turned for a new wife in 1561. Russia had entered the Circassian world as a result of the conquest of Kazan' (1552) and Astrakhan' (1556). After the Astrakhan' khanate was subdued, the Russians moved farther south and established their first fort on the Terek, Terskii gorodok, in 1567, a few miles north of Grozny. The location of the fort had nothing

10. Carl F. Petry, ed., *Cambridge history of Egypt*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1998): 290-317; David Ayalon, *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt* (London, 1997); Laurence Lockhart, *The fall of the Safavi dynasty and the Afghan occupation of Persia* (Cambridge, 1958); Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge, 1980). The best-known incident of Circassian involvement is the political struggle after the death of Shah Tahmasp in 1576: *Cambridge history of Iran*, vol. 6, Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, eds. (Cambridge, 1986): 247, 251, 254-255. In Persian terminology "Circassian" meant any inhabitant of the Caucasus north of Derbent, *ibid.*: 246.

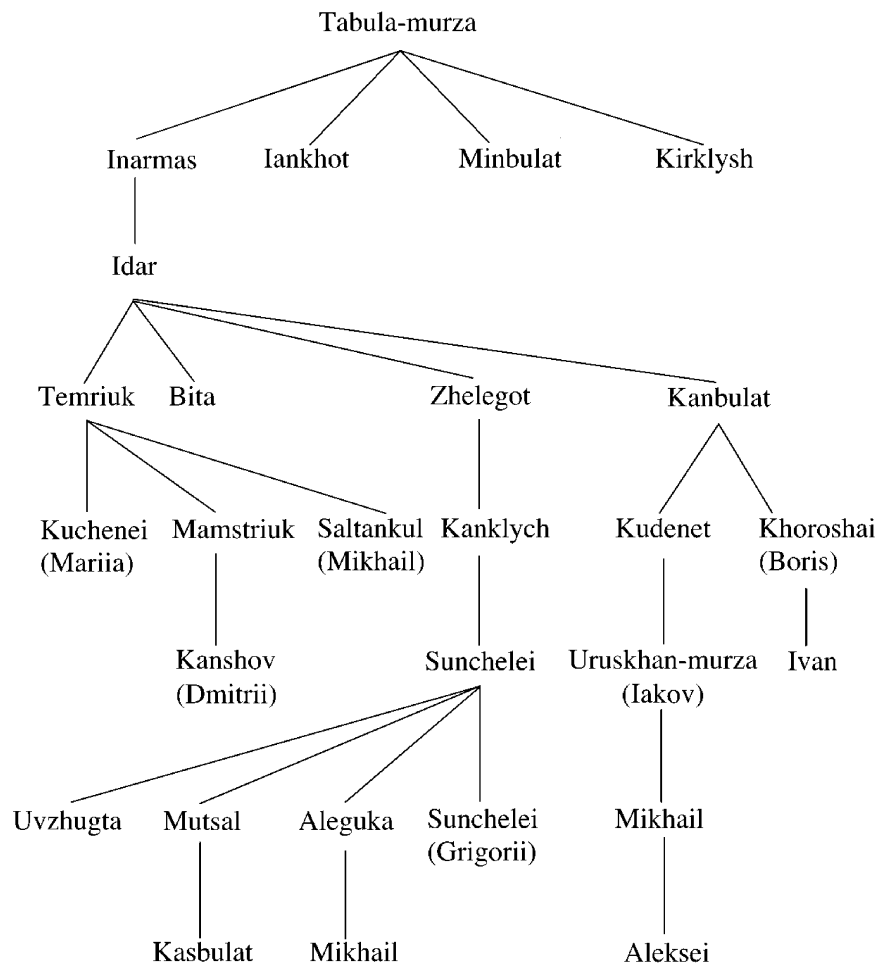
11. The history of the Circassians in the Caucasus in early modern era is very sparsely studied. Much of what is known comes from the story of their relationships with their neighbors and later, often unreliable, recollections. The best example of the latter is the work of Shora Nogmov (1794-1844) whose work on Circassian history contains much legendary material, especially for this period. Shora Nogmov, *Istoriia adygeiskogo naroda* (Nal'chik, 1994, originally Tiflis, 1861). See Brian J. Boeck, "Probing parity between history and oral tradition: Putting Shora Nogmov's *History of the Adygei people* in its place," *Central Asian Survey*, 17, 2 (June, 1998): 319-336.

12. A. Jaimoukha, *The Circassians*, *op. cit.*: 123-171; N. F. Dubrovin, *Istoriia voim i vladychestva russkikh na Kavkaze*, vols. 1-6 (St. Petersburg, 1871-1888), vol. 1, book 1: 63-259. Dubrovin devoted more space in his ethnographic survey of the north Caucasus to the Circassians than to any other people.



to do with the Chechens, then a small mountain people, dependents of the Circassian. Its position put the Russians at the eastern tip of Malaia Kabarda, near the land of the four princes who were the theoretical supreme rulers of the Circassians. The Kabarda princes had already asked for a Russian alliance against Crimea. In 1558 one of these princes, Temriuk the son of Idar, sent his young son Saltankul (baptized Mikhail) to Moscow to serve the tsar. Three years later Ivan turned to Saltankul's sister for a bride, Temriuk's daughter Kuchenei [Guashenei], baptized Mariia. Here too was an Astrakhan' connection, for Mariia's sister, Altynchach, was the wife of the Astrakhan' Tsarevich Bekbulat, who came also to Moscow that year to serve the tsar. Bekbulat was the father of Sain-Bulat, that is to say, Simeon Bekbulatovich, the "Grand Duke of All Rus'" of 1575-1576.

The princes Cherkasskii / Circassian princes



According to the Nikon chronicle the initiative for the marriage came from Ivan, choosing the Circassian princess after considering other options.¹³

The subsequent history of all these Circassian and other princes and princesses is part of the tangled story of the *Oprichnina*. Prince Mikhail Temriukovich Cherkasskii played a major role in the *Oprichnina*, placed in the army ahead of all other *Oprichnina* commanders. He also never received boyar rank, yet his name appears on the sparse documents and notices of the decisions of the *Blizhniaia дума*, noted by Sergei Bogatyrev, among others. He married the daughter of Tsaritsa Anastasia's cousin, that is, into the Romanov family. He, like the Tatar princes, also received an *udel*, the town and district of Gorokhovets. Mariia died in September, 1569, and Mikhail was executed in 1571. It seemed that the Circassians would be relegated to the southern border.¹⁴

This was not to be, for in 1575-1576, Khoroshai Kanbulatovich, to be baptized Boris, came to serve the tsar. Boris Kanbulatovich was the first cousin of Tsaritsa Mariia, and he made the family fortune when he married Marfa, the daughter of Nikita Romanovich Iur'ev, that is, the sister of Fyodor Nikitich Romanov, the future patriarch Filaret. Unlike his earlier relative, Prince Boris entered the Boyar *duma* with boyar rank in December, 1592. As far as we can trace his alliances at court, he was part of the Romanov grouping, and shared their fate when Boris Godunov exiled the Romanovs in November, 1600. Prince Boris died in prison in Belozero, possibly murdered, shortly after.¹⁵ The only one of the Circassian princes to support Boris Godunov, Prince Vasilii-Kazyi Kardanukovich Cherkasskii, was an Abaza Circassian who had come to Russia in the time of Ivan IV.¹⁶

13. E. N. Kusheva, *Narody severnogo Kavkaza i ikh sviazi s Rossiei: vtoraiia polovina XVI — 30-gody XVII veka* (Moscow, 1963): 179-256; "Patriarshaia ili Nikonovskaia letopis'," *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* [hereafter *PSRL*], 13 (reprint Moscow, 1965): 228, 259, 283-284, 312-313, 329-330, 333. T. Kh. Kumykov, E. N. Kusheva, eds., *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v XVI — XVIII vv.* [hereafter *KRO*], 2 vols. (Moscow, 1957), vol. 1.

14. A. A. Zimin, *Oprichnina Ivana Groznogo* (Moscow, 1964): 86, 289, 460-462. Staden believed that Mariia and her brother were quite important, and that the tsaritsa had given Ivan the idea of the *Oprichnina*. Heinrich von Staden, *Aufzeichnungen über den Moskauer Staat*, ed. by Fritz T. Epstein (Hamburg, 2nd ed., 1964): 19-20 (Universität Hamburg, Abhandlungen aus dem Gebiet der Auslandskunde, Bd. 34, Reihe A: Rechts- und Staatswissenschaften, Bd. 5). Zimin as well as Skrynnikov reject this notion: A. A. Zimin, *Oprichnina*, *op. cit.*: 134; R. G. Skrynnikov, *Tsarstvo terrora* (St. Petersburg, 1992): 226.

15. "Vypiski o priezhhavshikh na Moskvu tsarevichakh i Cherkasskikh i Nogaiskikh murzakh, s 1552 po 1618 gg," in *Dela Tainogo prikaza II, Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka*, 22 (St. Petersburg, 1908): 61; E. N. Kusheva, *Narody*, *op. cit.*: 258-259; S. P. Mordovina, "Sluzhilye," *art. cit.*: 334-335; A. P. Pavlov, *Gosudarev dvor*, *op. cit.*: 65, 115, 117; A. A. Zimin, *V kanun groznykh potriashenii: Predposylki pervoi krest'ianskoi voiny v Rossii* (Moscow, 1986): 194, 216; R. G. Skrynnikov, *Rossia v nachale XVII v.: 'Smuta'* (Moscow, 1988): 29, 32, 255; "Novyi letopisets," *PSRL* 14 (reprint, Moscow, 1965): 54.

16. Prince V. K. Cherkasskii won a precedence case against Prince Boris Kanbulatovich in 1599 and perished in 1607 defending Riazan' against the Bolotnikov rebels. Apparently the rivalries in the Caucasus were replicated in the factional struggles at the court of Boris Godunov. "Vypiski," *art. cit.*: 63-64; A. P. Pavlov, *Gosudarev dvor*, *op. cit.*: 64, 71; E. N. Kusheva, *Narody*, *op. cit.*: 155.

Prince B. K. Cherkasskii was not the only Circassian prince, for in 1592 another young Circassian prince came to Moscow, Kanshov, the son of Mamstriuk, who was baptized Dmitrii. Kanshov-Dmitrii sprang from the same family as Tsaritsa Mariia, for Mamstriuk was her brother. In 1578 Ivan IV had tried to make Mamstriuk the ruler of Kabarda, but to no avail. In 1588 Tsar Fyodor tried once again to grant the territory, this time together with Mamstriuk's cousin Kudenet Kanbulatovich. The Circassians chose instead Iansokh, the son of Kaituk, in the following year as the supreme prince. Tsar Fyodor confirmed this choice, but Iansokh was still unsuccessful in establishing his position.¹⁷ Mamstriuk himself later perished in a feud with Kazyi Psheapshokov in the 1590's, but his first cousin Kudenet Kanbulatovich lived on to the late 1620's. It was his son, Uruskhan, who came to Moscow about that time and was christened Iakov Kudenetovich in 1624.¹⁸

Prince Dmitrii Mamstriukovich Cherkasskii was already a *moskovskii dvorianin* in the 1590's, and figured in the *Smuta* in 1608-1610 in the entourage of Filaret Romanov. He became a boyar in 1619, on the return of Filaret. The next year he married Elena, the daughter of the diplomat, *okol'nichii*, and poet Aleksei Ivanovich Ziuzin and died after a long career in 1651. Prince Iakov Kudenetovich appears in the records in the *boiarskaia kniga* of 1627 as a *stol'nik*, and made boyar rank only in 1645, early in the reign of Tsar Aleksei, and died in 1666-1667. The third major Circassian prince, Boris Kanbulatovich had died about 1600, but his son Ivan Borisovich, became *kravchii* sometime later, a position from which Vasiliu Shuiskii removed him. In 1613 Prince Ivan Borisovich signed the election charter of Michael as boyar, though he actually received the rank only two months later, and died in 1642.¹⁹

During the *Smuta* the surviving adult Cherkasskii, Princes Ivan Borisovich and Dmitrii Mamstriukovich had stuck close to the Romanov clan.²⁰ Though Prince Ivan Borisovich was rewarded with boyar rank shortly after the election of Tsar Michael,

17. KROI: 34-35, 49-51, 62-64; E. N. Kusheva, *Narody, op. cit.*: 271-273.

18. KROI: 136. Kusheva believed that Kazyi may have opposed the more pro-Russian stance of Mamstriuk at this point, though in 1578 he had joined Kanbulat in requesting Russian aid against the Crimeans. E. N. Kusheva, *Narody, op. cit.*: 258, 285.

19. A. P. Pavlov, *Gosudarev dvor, op. cit.*: 115; S. F. Platonov, *Ocherki po istorii Smuty v Moskovskom gosudarstve XVI-XVII vv.*, 4th ed. (St. Petersburg, 1910): 294, 347, 395, 529; R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats, op. cit.*: 180, 182; S. D. Sheremetev, "Riadnaia zapis' Eleny Alekseevny Ziuzinoi (zheny kniazia Dmitriia Mamstriukovicha Cherkasskogo)," *Izvestiia russkogo genealogicheskogo obshchestva*, vyp. 3, materialy: 97-99. Though Ziuzin (who died in 1618-1619) had not been an aristocrat, the boyar Prince Grigorii Petrovich Romodanovskii and Prince Danilo Ivanovich Dolgorukii (later an *okol'nichii*, and died young) were both witnesses to the agreement. On Ziuzin see V. K. Ziborov, "Ziuzin, Aleksei Ivanovich," in D. S. Likhachev, ed., *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti Drevnei Rusi*, vyp. 3 (XVII v.), ch. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1992): 406-407. He went to announce Tsar Michael's election to King James of England in 1614 and was one of the Russian delegates to the negotiations with Sweden at Stolbovo in 1617.

20. Prince Ivan Borisovich Cherkasskii's sister Irina married F. I. Sheremetev (boyar 1605-1649). F. I. Sheremetev was generally a pro-Romanov figure through the *Smuta*. R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats, op. cit.*: 179-180; P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga* (St. Petersburg, 1854-1857), IV: 38; S. F. Platonov, *Ocherki, op. cit.*: 433.

he was not yet prominent, for this was the time of the preeminence of the Saltykovs at court. The return of Filaret in 1619, his election to the patriarchal throne and his de facto assumption of the reins of government changed his situation and that of his cousin Dmitrii. Isaac Massa, in a 1624 report for the Swedish government, reported that Prince Ivan Borisovich Cherkasskii was the head of the “military council,” in fact of the Musketeers Chancellery (*streletskii prikaz*, 1623-1642), and of the Apothecary Chancellery (1623-1637), an absolutely crucial position of trust as it dealt with the tsar’s doctors. He also headed the Mercenary Chancellery (1624-1642) and the Great Treasury (1622-1642) “In general they think that he shall receive the whole direction of the government.” He was the only boyar to support Filaret’s desire for war with Poland in 1630-1632. His power ended only with his death in 1642, though his brother-in-law F. I. Sheremetev replaced him as effective leader until the death of Tsar Michael in 1645.²¹ The boyar Prince Dmitrii Mamstriukovich ran the Kazan’ palace from 1624 to 1634, that is he administered the whole of the Volga region and the Russian forts on the Terek river and handled relations with the Circassians. Thus he was also in charge of Siberia (the Siberian office was separate only from 1637) during the 1624 reforms of Prince Iurii Ensheevich Suleshov, the son of a Crimean Tatar murza who came to Russia in Tsar Fyodor’s time.²²

By the reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich Prince Ivan Borisovich was dead with no heirs and had left his estate to Prince Iakov Kudenetovich Cherkasskii. Dmitrii Mamstriukovich played no important role in those years (he died in 1651), and also left his estate to Prince Iakov Kudenetovich, as did Prince Iu. E. Suleshev.²³ Prince Iakov Kudenetovich remained a central figure at court. He played a major role in the factional politics of 1645-1650 (allied with Nikita Romanov, opposing Boris Morozov), keeping continuity to a large extent with the

21. From 1638 to 1642 Cherkasskii’s colleague in the Musketeers Chancellery, the Mercenaries Chancellery, and the Great Treasury was his brother-in-law the boyar F. I. Sheremetev, who continued as head in all these offices after Cherkasskii’s death. Paul Bushkovitch, “The court of Tsar Michael in Swedish sources, 1619-1634,” *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 58 (Wiesbaden, 2001): 235-242; S. K. Bogoiavlenskii, *Prikaznye sud’i XVII veka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1946): 13-14, 24-25, 54-55, 164-165; R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats*, *op. cit.*: 180. “Knees Ivan Borisovits Tsercaski hoffm[eester] is oock t’hooff van de gantsche Crychsraatt curateur van de appteck des Grootvorsten schattsm[eester] ende men meenpt oock vastelyck datt hy t’gantsche bewint des Rycx zall crygen...” *Svenska riksarkivet*, Extranea 156.1; V. F. Rzhiga, “Soobshchenie iz dvukh shvedskikh istochnikov,” *Deistviia Nizhegorodskoi gubernskoi Uchenoi arkhivnoi kommissii*, 1 (Nizhnii Novogorod, 1913): 20 (with errors).

22. “Vypiski,” *art. cit.*: 62. The Suleshov clan in Crimea functioned as *amiats* for Russia in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, providing practical aid to Russian envoys and often serving as Crimean ambassadors to Russia. A. A. Novosel’skii, *Bor’ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva s tatarami v pervoi polovine XVII v.* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1948): 19 (1563, Sulesh), 47-48 (1602, Akhmet Suleshev), 83-84 (1614, Akhmet Suleshev), 102-103 (1620, bey Ibrem pasha Suleshev), 108 (1623, same), 191-192 (1631, Ali Suleshev); *KRO* I: 17-19, 21-22, 30 (1571). Prince Iurii Ensheevich was part of this clan and brother-in-law to the Boris and Mikhail Mikhailovich Saltykov, with tsaritsa Marfa the major figures at court in 1613-1620: P. Bushkovitch, “The court”, *art. cit.*: 237; P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga*, *op. cit.*, II: 71. The Suleshev reforms involved the substitution of land grants to garrison soldiers in the Siberian forts for previous salaries paid in grain. See S. V. Bakhrushin, “Voevody Tobol’skogo razriada v XVII v.,” *Nauchnye trudy*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1955): 265-273.

23. R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats*, *op. cit.*: 122.



Cherkasskii-Sheremetev group of Tsar Michael's time. During the 1648 Moscow revolt Tsar Aleksei placed him in charge of the Musketeers Chancellery, replacing Morozov, a move which suggests that the Caucasian prince was popular with the army and the crowd. On Morozov's return in the autumn he lost the position to the tsar's brother-in-law Il'ia Miloslavskii. Prince Iakov Kudenetovich also, along with Nikita Ivanovich Romanov, did not sign the 1649 Conciliar Law Code. Nevertheless, Cherkasskii served as an important general in the war against Poland of 1653-1667, commanding the Great Regiment in 1654-1655. He died in 1666.²⁴

The Cherkasskiis were not only prominent in government and the army, they were also the single richest boyar clan in Russia, a status more remarkable given the small size of the clan. In 1646 the clan owned 11,855 serfs, and by 1678 the number had grown to an astonishing 29,198. By contrast, the princes Dolgorukii, second wealthiest in 1678, possessed 13,861 and princes Golitsyn in the third place possessed 12,527. In part their wealth came from favor at court, but also from their clan solidarity. As Robert Crummey put it, "they had no qualms about leaving their property to comparatively distant relatives as long as it remained in the possession of the family group." The result was that Prince Mikhail Iakovlevich Cherkasskii, the son of Prince Iakov Kudenetovich, was the single richest man in late seventeenth century Russia.²⁵

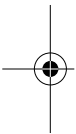
A new generation

The first group of Circassians who came to Moscow in the second half of the sixteenth century were the relatives, children or nephews, of one of the chief princes of Kabarda, Temriuk, son of Idar. This clan had tried to maintain its supremacy over Kabarda but by the early seventeenth century had decisively failed. After their defeat by Kazyi Psheapshokov, who withdrew toward the Kuban', the strongest ruler in Kabarda was Sholokh Tapsarukov, whose original base was in Malaia Kabarda and who lasted until 1615. The second group of Circassian princes who came to Russia later in the seventeenth sprang from another branch of the house of Idar, but were no longer powerful figures in Kabarda. They were the descendants of Zhelegot, the brother of Temriuk and Kanbulat. Zhelegot's one son Kanklych had two sons, the first died without heirs, the second was Sunchelei. Sunchelei came to live in Terskii gorodok about 1600, escaping from the defeat of Temriuk and Kanbulat.²⁶ The Russian town of Terskii gorodok, since 1588 no

24. P. P. Smirnov, *Posadskie liudi i ikh klassovaia bor'ba do serediny XVII veka*, 2 vols. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947-1948), vol. 2: 19, 190-193, 196-215; V. Beneshevich, "Cherkasskii, kniaz' Iakov Kudenetovich," *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, Chaadaev-Shvitkov (St. Petersburg, 1905): 220-224; O. A. Koshelev, "Leto 1645 goda: Smena lits na rossiiskom prestole," *Kazus 1999* (Moscow, 1999): 148-170.

25. O. A. Shvatchenko, *Svetkie feodal'nye votchiny v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XVII veka* (Moscow, 1996): 106-107, 122, 130-132, 262, 264, 282; R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats, op. cit.*: 114-115, 121-122.

26. E. N. Kusheva, *Narody, op. cit.*: 285; *KROI*: 89, 385, 399.





longer near present-day Grozny, had been moved farther down the river to a site in present-day northern Dagestan.²⁷

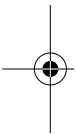
The victor in the 1590's, Kazyi Psheapshokov, seems to have been more pro-Crimean than his opponents (or at least more subject to Crimean pressure). Nevertheless, he once again swore loyalty to the new Tsar Michael after the *Smuta*, but perished in November 1616 in a battle with his Circassian enemies and the Great Nogais. In Kabarda after 1616 the principal chieftain was Aleguko Shogenukov, the nephew of Kazyi Psheapshokov. Russian sources even refer to this part of Great Kabarda as "Kazyeva Kabarda." Aleguko Shogenukov was generally hostile to Sunchelei's descendants and though he swore loyalty to Tsar Michael in 1619, he was inclined to favor Crimea rather than Russia without fully breaking ties with either. He lasted in this position until the 1650's.²⁸ Thus the house of Idar no longer played a major role in Bol'shaia Kabarda itself. In Malaia Kabarda by contrast the Russians had a stronger position, which reflected holdings by the house of Idar and proximity to Terskii gorodok. Back in Terskii gorodok Sunchelei and his descendants retained their position; its princes were the lords of all the non-Russians of the area, Circassians, Chechens and others not under Dagestani rulers. Sunchelei was last mentioned in 1626, but his widow Zhelegosha remained an important figure into the 1640's. Olearius met her in 1636 on his way to Persia and had the impression that she was in charge of the family affairs, including a project to marry her daughter Uvzhugta to the Shah of Iran Safi I (1629-1642) and supervising her son Mutsal.²⁹ She also sent two other sons to the Russian court, one who died young and the other Mutsal's brother Sunchelei Sunchelevich, baptized Grigorii. Grigorii (Sunchelei) Sunchelevich first appears in Russian court records as a *rynda* and *stol'nik* carrying the tsar's *saadak* in the first pilgrimage of Tsar Aleksei as tsar to the Trinity Monastery in September, 1645. He was married to Princess Praskov'ia Nikitichna Odoevskaia, the daughter of one of Russia's most influential and best educated boyars. He became a boyar himself in 1657 and perished in 1672. Prince Grigorii Sunchelevich seems to have held no major office in Moscow, but was *voevoda* in Astrakhan' in 1660-1663.³⁰

27. In 1571 Ivan IV had bowed to Ottoman demands and abandoned the first Terskii gorodok. E. N. Kusheva, *Narody*, *op. cit.*: 255-256, 269.

28. *KROI*: 97, 402, 406; E. N. Kusheva, *Narody*, *op. cit.*: 129-130.

29. *KRO* I: 108, 200-202, 211, 219; Adam Olearius, *Vermehrte neue Beschreibung der Muscovitischen und Persischen Reyse* (Schleswig, 1656, reprint, Tübingen, 1971): 393. The Circassian genealogies (see below) record that Uvzhugta married the Shah, presumably Safi I, *KRO* I: 385. See also *Cambridge history of Iran*, *op. cit.*, 6: 278-288. I have been unable to confirm or deny the claim from Persian records accessible to me. I wish to thank my Yale colleagues Profs. Abbas Amanat and Adel Allouche for assistance in this matter. Their searches were no more fruitful.

30. *Dvortsovye razriady* [hereafter *DR*], 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1850-1855), vol. III (1852): 13; R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats*, *op. cit.*: 192; A. P. Barsukov, *Spiski gorodovykh voevod i drugikh lits voevodskogo upravleniia Moskovskogo gosudarstva XVII stoletiiia* (St. Petersburg, 1902): 10. Princess Praskov'ia died in 1658, judging from the donation (700 rubles) to the Trinity Monastery in July of that year: E. N. Klitina, T. N. Manushina, T. V. Nikolaeva, eds., *Vkladnaia kniga Troitse-Sergieva monastyria* (Moscow, 1987): 110; Paul Bushkovitch, "Cultural change among the Russian boyars 1650-1680: New sources and old problems," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 56 (Wiesbaden, 2000): 104.





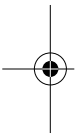
On the Terek, Zhelogosha disappears about 1643, and from then on into the 1650's it was her son Mutsal who was in charge, with a large household and many dependents in and around Terskii gorodok. Mutsal's son Kasbulat remained in Terskii gorodok, and was the principal figure on the Russian side in the area through 1681-1682. Tsar Aleksei specifically granted him lordship over the Circassians and Chechens who served the Russians on the Terek in September, 1661. The chief object of the Russians in the area was the maintenance of an alliance with Kabarda, which seems to have been increasingly difficult.³¹ Mutsal also had a brother, Aleguka Sunchelevich, whose son Mikhail also ended up in Russia somewhat later. Prince Mikhail Alegukovich was a *stol'nik* by 1665, boyar 1676-1677, and died about 1712.³² Prince Mikhail Alegukovich was thus the nephew of the boyar Prince Grigorii Sunchelevich, of Prince Mutsal Sunchelevich on the Terek, and perhaps of one of the wives of the Shah of Iran. Prince Mikhail married the last Princess Pozharskaia, Evdokiia Ivanovna, the widow of *stol'nik* Semen Nikitich Boborykin.³³

Prince Mikhail Alegukovich was a major political actor in Russia for a generation. He was *voevoda* in Novogorod in 1674-1676, after which he made boyar. He commanded the *Bol'shoi polk* against the Turks and Crimeans in 1679, may have participated in other campaigns of the Chigirin war of 1677-1681, and in 1681 was *voevoda* of Kazan'. In 1682 he was one of the boyars of the Naryshkin faction during the revolt of the *strel'tsy*. During Sofia's regency he continued to lead the Naryshkin faction together with Peter's mother Tsaritsa Natal'ia and Prince Boris Alekseevich Golitsyn. In 1683 he helped Prince Boris to intrigue with the Danish ambassador to derail Sofia and Prince Vasilii Vasil'evich Golitsyn's foreign policy. In the same year Cherkasskii clashed with Prince Vasilii Golitsyn during the annual September pilgrimage to the Trinity Monastery, a clash so sharp that they drew daggers and were separated with difficulty. The Danish resident Heinrich Butenant, a Naryshkin ally, reported that Cherkasskii was an "unruly head, a Tatar mirza by birth." In the fall of 1686 Sofia seems to have considered him to command the expedition against Crimea planned for the next year, since Cherkasskii was experienced in Turkish War of 1676-1680. As we know Sofia gave the position to V. V. Golitsyn, who failed at the attempt. When Peter went to the

31. V. N. Sokurov, "O kharaktere russko-kabardinskikh politicheskikh sviazei v 70-kh godakh XVII veka," *Sbornik statei po istorii Kabardino-balkarii*, vyp. 10 (Nal'chik, 1976): 3-14; *KRO* I: 192-197, 209-211, 264-269, 304-306, 315 (last mention, spring, 1653), 325-326 (grant to Mutsal).

32. *DR* III: 599; R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats*, *op. cit.*: 200; *KRO* I: 360; P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga*, *op. cit.*, IV: 39; [P. I. Ivanov], *Alfavitnyi ukazatel' familii i lits, upominaemykh v boiarskikh knigakh* (Moscow, 1853): 455.

33. Prince Mikhail Alegukovich's connections among the Russian elite were many. By 1679 he had acquired a client in the *okol'nichii* Prince Danilo Stepanovich Velikogo-Gagin, and in 1694 he married his son Prince Boris to Princess Marfa Stepanovna Romodanovskaia, the niece of Prince Boris Alekseevich Golitsyn. N. N. Kashkin, "Stolptsy kniazei Cherkasskikh," *Izvestiia russkogo genealogicheskogo obshchestva*, vyp. 2 (1903), otdel III: 5-7; P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga*, *op. cit.*, I: 285-286.



Trinity Monastery in August, 1689, to carry out his coup against Sofia, Cherkasskii went with him. In the ensuing first decade of Peter's reign, Prince Mikhail Alegukovich was a major figure. Peter originally wanted him as supreme commander for the second Azov campaign of 1696, but had to appoint M. S. Shein instead. Prince Mikhail Alegukovich was simply too old for such a rigorous expedition. He was still sufficiently prominent in 1700 that the book copyist and apocalyptic prophet Grigorii Talitskii thought that the people would soon turn to Prince Mikhail as a new tsar to replace the Antichrist Peter. In later years the Don Cossacks saw Cherkasskii as a patron, implying that he still had some role right up to his death.³⁴

At the end of the seventeenth century the situation changed on the Terek and in Kabarda. From 1671 Crimea was on the offensive, raiding Kabarda and making local alliances. The last 20 years of the century in Terskii gorodok are extremely obscure, and it may have been in decline as a center. Kasbulat Mutsalovich's successor as Circassian prince in Terskii gorodok was Saltanbek Kanbulatovich, granted lordship over the Circassians and Chechens serving the tsar in 1682. His daughter Tauka Saltanbekovna held on into the 1690's.³⁵

Events during Peter's reign are not much clearer. The Crimeans staged several major raids, the most important in 1708. In 1711 Peter tried a diversion for the Pruth campaign from Kabarda to the Kuban' against Crimea, but nothing came of it. The leader of that diversion was the only new Circassian prince to come to Moscow, the ill-fated Alexander Bekovich-Cherkasskii. His place among the Circassian princes is obscure, but was certainly not a close relative of either group that had settled in Moscow earlier in the seventeenth century. Later Peter sent Bekovich-Cherkasskii off to Khiva where he was killed in 1717.³⁶ After the Bekovich-Cherkasskii episode in Kabarda, the area seems to have split between two rival clan groupings, one seeking Crimean aid and the other continuously appealing for Russian help. The 1739 Russo-Ottoman treaty recognized Kabarda's independence from both Russia and Turkey. Though the

34. Prince Mikhail Alegukovich was thus in 1679 a colleague of Prince M. Iu. Dolgorukii, commander of the Kazan' army as head of the Kazan' Palace, whose letter to him survives. *DR* IV: 116-118 (1679); A. P. Barsukov, *Spiski*, *op. cit.*: 89, 155; Paul Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great: The struggle for power 1671-1725* (Cambridge, 2001): 141-142, 149-151, 153, 159, 181, 185-186, 205-206, 222-223; N. N. Kashkin, "Stolptsy," *art. cit.*: 7-9, 14-15.

35. V. N. Sokurov, "Iz istorii vzaimootnoshenii Kabardy i Kryma v kontse XVII — nachale XVIII veka," *Sbornik statei po istorii Kabardino-Balkarii*, vyp. 10 (Nal'chik, 1976): 27-40; *KRO* I: 247, 376; E. N. Kusheva, *Russko-chechenskie otnosheniia: vtoraia polovina XVI — XVII v.* (Moscow, 1997): 249.

36. *KRO* II: 3-15; P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga*, *op. cit.* IV: 43; V. Beneshevich, "Cherkasskii, Aleksandr Bekovich," *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, Chaadaev-Shvitkov (St. Petersburg, 1905): 177-183. He married a Princess Golitsyn, daughter of Prince Boris Golitsyn. P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga*, *op. cit.*, I: 288; Johann Georg Korb, *Diarium itineris in Moscoviam*: 65-66; trans. Edmund Leingärtner, *Tagebuch der Reise nach Rußland* (Graz, 1968): 70. By later eighteenth century reports Bekovich Cherkasskii was the son of Saltan-bek Aslan murza and brother of Tauka Saltanbekovna. He came to Moscow on the invitation of Princess A. V. Cherkasskaia, widow of Prince Petr El'murzich. S. V. Liubimov, "Kniaz'ia Bekovich-Cherkasskii, Materialy dlia rodoslovnoi," *Letopis' Istoriko-rodoslovnogo obshchestva v Moskve*, 1-4 (41-44) (1915): 45-47. Prince Petr El'murzich had arrived in Moscow about the same time as Prince Grigorii Suncheleevich: *KRO* I: 385, 418.



Russians remained in the area, they have made little attempt to further penetrate Kabarda until after the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardzha. The treaty gave Russia hegemony over Crimea itself and thus indirectly (Russia argued) over Kabarda.³⁷

The families that had settled in Russia continued to play a major political role. While Prince Grigorii Suncheleevich had only one son, Danilo, who, in turn, had no descendants, the line of Prince Iakov Kudenetovich flourished. His son Mikhail Iakovlevich was governor of Tobol'sk in 1700-1709, held other important positions, and died in 1712. He was extremely prolific, having one son and four daughters who lived to adulthood. The son, Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich Cherkasskii (1680-1742) was a major figure, playing a central role in Russian politics in the 1720's and 1730's. Prince Mikhail Alegukovich's descendants were undistinguished in the eighteenth century, but they produced the best known Prince Cherkasskii of the nineteenth century, Prince Vladimir Aleksandrovich (1824-1878), who was involved on the liberal side of the Editorial Committee that ultimately produced the emancipation statute of the peasants of 1861.³⁸

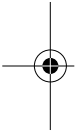
In Peter's time the central role of the Circassian princes in the Russian ruling elite came to an end. Russia's role in Kabarda from about 1640 to about 1730 was in retreat. In the sixteenth century it had been the chief princes of Kabarda whose sons came to Moscow, but there seems to have been a hiatus from 1600 to about 1650, and the second group came not from Kabarda but from the Circassian princes serving the Russian tsar in Terskii gorodok. Part of the explanation may be the arrival of the Kalmyks in 1634, who displaced the Nogais and changed the whole ethno-political situation of the southern steppe. With powerful steppe allies in the Kalmyks, the Russians had less need of the Circassians. At the same time, the Crimeans increased their pressure on Kabarda. The increased Crimean presence coming on top of the Russian expansion to the Terek seems to have put an end to Circassian political dominance in the north Caucasus by 1700. When some of the Kabarda princes were again asked for Russian help in the 1720's, the request did not come with the dispatch of their sons to Russia to join the Russian aristocracy.³⁹ At that level the tie was never reestablished. For a century and a half, however, the Circassian princes formed a distinct group of Caucasian, originally Muslim, foreigners at the very pinnacle of Russian society and the Russian state.⁴⁰

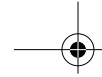
37. KROII: 152-159, 318-319.

38. P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga, op. cit.*, IV: 38-41.

39. In 1722 Prince Arslan-bek Kaitukin's request for aid came with an offer to send his son and nephew to Russia as hostages (*amanat*), thus reverting to earlier practice: KRO II: 33-34; M. Khodarkovsky, *Frontier, op. cit.*: 58.

40. There were also lesser Circassian princes who came to Moscow and served the tsars. The Akhamashukov-Cherkasskiis may have come to Russia as early as 1544 but only the last Prince Vasilii Petrovich, made duma rank (*okol'nichii*) in 1635. He died without heirs in 1651: P. I. Ivanov, *Alfavitnyi ukazatel', op. cit.*: 15; R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats, op. cit.*: 185. The Egupovich-Cherkasskiis did rather better, starting as *stol'niki* under Tsar Michael. Their grandchildren were *komnatnye stol'niki* to Tsar Ivan V and his wife Praskov'ia from about 1686. The family was afterwards undistinguished, and died out in the early nineteenth century: P. I. Ivanov, *Alfavitnyi ukazatel', op. cit.*: 127; P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga, op. cit.*, IV: 43.





The problem of Circassian identity

The Circassian boyars in Moscow were important as individuals, but they also maintained some features of group identity. They and others were aware of their Caucasian roots and their continuing ties with Kabarda. The sources do not, however, always reflect that identity: in Russian chronicles and the official records of the *razriad*, there is nothing to indicate that the Circassians were in any way different from other boyars. The official genealogical compilations, in contrast, presented the story not only of their origins but a continuing story of Kabarda. European diplomats and other observers, at least in the later seventeenth century, noted and underlined their exotic origins.

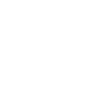
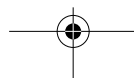
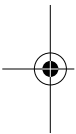
In the sixteenth century, both Russian and European sources consistently say almost nothing about the Circassians in Moscow as foreigners. The account of the establishment of relations with them in the 1550's and the arrival of Mariia Temriukovna in 1561 is completely bland, merely stating that she arrived from the Caucasus, but with no comment even on her conversion to Orthodoxy. Two of the main foreign accounts of the period, those of Schlichting and Taube and Kruse mention Mariia Temriukovna and her brother, but neither describe nor comment on their "foreignness." The only exception to this rule appears to be Heinrich von Staden, who mentioned both, even attributing to Mariia the idea of the *Oprichnina* soldiers. He also described the death of her brother on Ivan's orders, and noted the presence of Circassians, along with Germans and "Lithuanians" in Moscow as foreign communities.⁴¹

Later on the story is no different. Fletcher mentions Prince Boris Kanbulatovich but seemed unaware of his origin. Sir Jerome Horsey barely mentioned the issue. The Western histories of the Time of Troubles, such as those of Isaac Massa or Jacques Margeret, omit the Cherkasskiis.⁴² The important role of the Cherkasskiis at Tsar Michael's court also elicited no comment about their nationality from the sparse foreign observers of the period, or in the *Novyi letopisets*. The Swedish diplomatic sources, in 1624 and 1632, have nothing to say particularly about their origins. Olearius mentions them, but goes into detail only in his description of Terskii gorodok. The same is true of the early years of Tsar Aleksei. In Kotoshikhin the Prince Iakov Kudenetovich is quite prominent, but without comment on his birth. Pommerening's account of Russian politics 1648-1650 mentions the Cherkasskii princes frequently, but with no comments about their origins or ethnicity.⁴³

41. PSRL 13: 312-313, 333, 339; H. von Staden, *Aufzeichnungen*, *op. cit.*: 19-20, 54, 108, 123; Hugh F. Graham, ed. and trans., "A brief account of the character and brutal rule of Vasil'evich, tyrant of Muscovy (Albert Schlichting on Ivan Grozny)," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 9, n° 2 (Summer, 1975): 227-229; M. G. Roginskii, "Poslanie Ioganna Taube i Ellert Kruse," *Russkii istoricheskii zhurnal*, 8 (1922): 40-41, 54 [*Beiträge zur Kenntnis Rußlands* I, 1816].

42. Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, and Sir Jerome Horsey, *Travels*, in Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, *Rude and barbarous kingdom: Russia in the accounts of sixteenth-century English voyagers* (Madison, WI, 1968): 181, 265, 331.

43. K. I. Iakubov, ed., "Rossiia i Shvetsiia v pervoi polovine XVII v.," *Chteniia v Obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh* (1898), I: 416 (Pommerening, 24 April 1648), 419 (6 July 1648), 432-433 (30 December 1648); A. Olearius, *Vermehrte neue Beschreibung*, *op. cit.*: 253, 393-394, 739-745; G. K. Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v tsarstvovanie Alekseia Mikhailovicha*, ed. G. A. Leont'eva (Moscow, 2000): 44.





At the same time, the Cherkasskis were clearly proud of their origin. This pride is evident from the section on the Circassian princes that appeared in the “Sovereign’s genealogy” (*Gosudarev rodoslovets*), the quasi-official genealogy of the Russian aristocracy. First compiled in the 1555, the collection included genealogies of the Moscow Grand Princes, other Riurikovich princes, the Gediminovich princes in Russia, the Tatar tsarevichi (descendants of Ginghiz Khan), the various untitled Moscow boyar clans, and well as the Grand Princes of Lithuania. The “Sovereign’s genealogy” was an official document compiled in large part by the *razriad* secretary Elizar Tsypliatev, but innumerable copies and excerpts circulated widely in private hands.⁴⁴ The first redaction was too soon for the Circassians, but the next major redaction, represented in the “Genealogy of Patriarch Filaret” (so called from one of the manuscripts) also lacks the Circassians, though it dates from the reign of Ivan the Terrible.⁴⁵ It seems that the Circassian princes first appear in the 81-chapter Genealogy variant (*izvod*) of the original redaction of the “Sovereign’s genealogy,” a variant compiled about 1655. This variant gives the genealogy of all the Circassian princes, only a small number of whom came to Moscow. The “Russian” Circassians are a handful compared with the dozens of relatives back home, and the text includes many local events from Kabarda that have no apparent bearing on Russia. If read carefully, it is virtually a brief history of Kabarda.⁴⁶ Thus describing contests for power at the end of the sixteenth century the genealogical form allows the author to tell a complex story. On Prince Dmitrii Mamstriukovich and his brothers it says:

Prince Mamstriuk had three sons, the first son Kanshov murza, in baptism Prince Dmitrii Mamstriukovich. The second [was] Ali murza, childless, and they killed him near Sholokh’s settlements [*kabaki*] when the [Russian] sovereign’s people were campaigning under Nikita Vel’iaminov [1621]. The third [was] Kaituk murza, childless, he drowned in the Kuban’ river when he rode for booty against the Abazans.

44. M. E. Bychkova, *Rodoslovnye knigi XVI-XVII vv. kak istoricheskii istochnik* (Moscow, 1975): 32-64. Bychkova insisted on the “official” character of the genealogical books, though she herself acknowledges that many manuscripts were written or owned by various boyars and even lesser folk. *Ibid.*: 14-16, 60, 110, 114, 117. The 1555 redaction has not been published.

45. The patriarchal redaction: *Vremennik O IDR*, 10: 125-203 (= Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnih aktov — RGADA, f. 181, op. 282) and “Rodoslovnaia kniga sviatetshego gosudaria Filareta Nikiticha patriarkha vseia Rossii,” *Iubileinyi sbornik S.-Peterburgskogo arkhologicheskogo instituta 1613-1913* (St. Petersburg, 1912): 1-106. A copy of another redaction, the early seventeenth century redaction, also lacking the Circassian genealogy is found in *Vremennik O IDR*, 10: 1-130 (= Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei — GIM, Sin. 860). Another sixteenth century version may be found in *Vremennik O IDR*, 10: 204-266, from RGADA, f. 181; M. E. Bychkova, *Rodoslovnye*, *op. cit.*: 78, 111.

46. Two versions of the Circassian chapters are published in *KRO I*: 383-387 and S. A. Belokurov, “Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom,” vyp. 1, 1578-1613, *Chteniiia v obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh* (1888) III: 1-8. These come from RGADA, f. 181, op. 176 (1768, originally belonging to A. M. Pushkin) and f. 181, op. 173 (1664, copied by the *stol’nik* Prince A. I. Lobanov-Rostovskii): M. E. Bychkova, *Rodoslovnye*, *op. cit.*: 60, 62-63, 186.





The text continues, describing the death of Mamstriuk:

Kazy murza and his brothers killed Domanuk and Mamstriuk, inviting them to drink mead with him, and held them at his house in chains and on the third day he killed them. And Kazy himself with his own and their settlements migrated away and lived in Beslen [northwest of Kabarda] for three years. But Sunchelei and Kudenet and their brothers ran to the Terek, and from those places Sunchelei remained on the Terek. And Mamstriuk was very good and noble, and many feared him in Kabarda, so they killed him from envy.⁴⁷

In contrast the genealogies of the Tatar and Nogai tsarevichi and princes in the other versions do not include large numbers of people who never came to Russia or recent events among the Tatars and Nogais like those found in the Cherkasskii genealogy. The same is true for the Lithuanian princes.⁴⁸

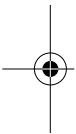
These genealogies of the Circassian princes were not obscure sources. There are four early complete manuscripts of the 81-chapter variant, that is, the 1768 manuscript of A. M. Pushkin, and three from the seventeenth century. All of the owners, whose names are inscribed on the manuscripts, came from important aristocratic families. Prince S. V. Romodanovskii, though he never rose above the rank of *stol'nik* and died young, was the son, nephew, and first cousin of important boyars and military commanders. Iurii Ivanovich Saltykov, a *moskovskii dvorianin* in 1668, became a boyar in 1689, was a member of the Saltykov clan whose fortunes were made by the marriage of Tsar Ivan V to Praskov'ia Saltykova (the first cousin of Iurii Ivanovich) in 1684. The third was Prince A. I. Lobanov-Rostovskii, a *stol'nik* since 1658, made *okol'nichii* in 1676 and died the same year.⁴⁹ Given the small size of the Russian elite and the vagaries of survival for manuscript books, this is impressive circulation.

The Moscow Circassians also retained ties with Kabarda and may have had some reputation as specialists on the Crimeans, Turks, and other southern peoples. As mentioned above, Prince D. M. Cherkasskii ran the Kazan' Palace for over a decade, that is, he dealt with his homeland. In 1635 with the Smolensk war over, Tsar Michael began a massive reconstruction of the southern defensive line against the Tatars, and in 1637 put Prince Ivan Borisovich Cherkasskii in charge, presumably until his death. In the 1640's feuding chieftains in Kabarda used their relatives in Moscow to try to

47. KRO I: 105, 384-385. "Brat'ia" here probably means cousins, as is often the case in the seventeenth century.

48. The Tatar and Nogai genealogies in *Vremennik O IDR*, 10: 125-130 (patriarchal redaction) have two stories, one the story of Tatar origins misleadingly called "Rod turskikh tsarei" (126-127), which follows a legendary account of the Turks ("Predislovie rodom turskikh tsarei") and itself contains much legendary detail, and the other simply a genealogy. The latter is called "Rod tsarei Bol'shie Ordy" (127-130) and gives only names. It begins with Chingis Khan and Edigei, identifying those Tatars and Nogais who came to serve the Russian princes and tsars. The sixteenth century genealogy in *Vremennik O IDR*, 10: 221-222 also has only names.

49. M. E. Bychkova, *Rodoslovnye*, *op. cit.*: 60-61. P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga*, *op. cit.*, II: 72-73; R. O. Crummey, *Aristocrats*, *op. cit.*: 187, 192, 199, 201, 210. P. I. Ivanov, *Alfavitnyi ukazatel'*, *op. cit.*: 233, 357, 365. It is impossible to tell if the Pushkin manuscript reflects earlier texts in the possession of the Pushkin family, but it does demonstrate the survival of information on the Circassian princes into the eighteenth century.





get the Russian tsar on their side. Aleguko Sheganukov, the strongest prince in Kabarda, tried to enlist Prince Dmitrii Mamstriukovich (a very distant cousin), while his rival Kelmamet Kudenetovich turned to his brother Prince Iakov Kudenetovich.⁵⁰ On the whole Tsar Aleksei does not seem to have used the Cherkasskis in the North Caucasus, but perhaps the cause was his preoccupation with Poland until 1667. Prince Iakov Kudenetovich was an important commander against the Poles, even though he had opposed the tsar's favorites in 1648. The only case where a Circassian had official contact with his homeland was the years 1660-1663 when Grigorii Suncheleevich was voevoda of Astrakhan'. In spring, 1676, the Ambassadorial Office ordered Prince Mikhail Alegukovich from his governorship of Novgorod to Moscow, presumably to a command in the coming Chigirin campaign, and informed his cousin Kasbulat Mutsalovich about it. As Kasbulat had just been ordered to Kiev, presumably Prince Mikhail's presence was felt to be important to Kasbulat. In December, 1689, Tauka Saltanbekovna wrote to Prince Mikhail Alegukovich with news from Terskii gorodok, even though Prince Boris Alekseevich Golitsyn as head of the Kazan' Palace was the more normal recipient.⁵¹

The Cherkasskiis also seem to have formed a group with some internal solidarity in Moscow. Not only did Dmitrii Mamstriukovich (along with the Crimean Prince Suleshev) leave his estates and other property to Iakov Kudenetovich, he also gave the young Prince Grigorii Suncheleevich a house in Moscow on Tverskaia street and an estate near Moscow which Prince Dmitrii built up specifically for Grigorii. Evidently the earlier established Circassians took care of the new arrivals. This generosity was not always adequately rewarded: after Prince Dimtrii's death Prince Grigorii Suncheleevich tried unsuccessfully to contest the will and get for himself the property left to Iakov Kudenetovich.⁵² Circassian solidarity only went so far.

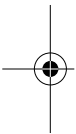
The self-consciousness explicit in the 1655 genealogy and the continued ties with Kabarda and Terskii gorodok are one aspect of Circassian identity in Moscow. Another is the frequency with which Europeans now portrayed the Circassian boyars as exotic, even a bit savage. In the description of Russia by the Polish prisoner of war Pawel Potocki (c. 1625-1675), the author appended to his text a short account of all the boyars as they were in 1668, just before he returned home. On Prince G. S. Cherkasskii he wrote: "swifter with his hand than his tongue, lacking enough not only in learning but in more cultivated manners and solidly brave by the strength of his body, he is esteemed rather than dear to the tsar by his reputation for military virtue." He was a great trainer of horses. His religion was a pretence and he was careless of human blood, continued Potocki. Perhaps Potocki was right, for Prince Grigorii was murdered by his Tatar servants in 1672.⁵³ Prince

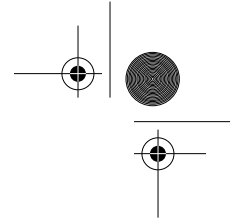
50. A. A. Novosel'skii, *Bor'ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva, op. cit.*: 295; *KROI*: 181-182, 385.

51. *KROI*: 360; N. N. Kashkin, "Stolptsy," *art. cit.*: 10-11.

52. G. S. Sh., "Dukhovnoe zaveshchanie Kniazia Dimitriia Mamstriukovicha Cherkasskogo," *Letopis' Istoriko-rodoslovnogo obshchestva v Moskve*, 4, 12 (1907): 17-24.

53. Paulus Potocki, *Moschovia sive brevis narratio de moribus Magnae Russorum Monarchiae, in Opera omnia* (Warsaw, 1747): 192-193; *Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim*, 12 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1846-1875), vol. 6 (1857): 260-261.



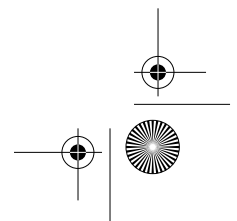


Mikhail Alekukovich Cherkasskii was just as exotic, though he played a greater political role. If the Danish resident thought that he was an “unruly head” in 1687, implying that his “Tatar” birth accounted for that characteristic, there were other opinions. The secretary to the Austrian embassy of 1698-1699, Johann Korb, thought him notable for his probity and lack of vices.⁵⁴

It seems that we have here a paradox. For the first century of Circassian presence in the Russian elite, from the 1550's to the 1650's, they seem to be invisible not as individuals but as Circassians. They married into two ruling dynasties and played an important role in Russian politics, while simultaneously maintaining ties (revealed if nothing else by the continuous arrival of relatives) with their homeland in Kabarda. After the 1650's the Circassian princes kept up the ties just as well, but seem to have both more awareness of their identity and at least foreigners seem to notice it more as well. Of course these are two different groups of Circassians. The earlier group were the sons and daughters of the great chieftains of Kabarda, while the later group were the sons only of the lords of the Circassians under Russian rule in Terskii gorodok, out of power in Kabarda itself. Yet this would seem backwards. Should it not be the first group that is more distinctive and self-conscious, raised as they were outside of Russian territory and in powerful local families? It is particularly odd that foreigners like von Staden or Fletcher, who picked up all sorts of personal facts and wild rumors, found little or nothing bearing on the Circassians, in spite of their prominence.

Whatever the explanation, at the very end of the seventeenth century the whole story comes to an end, for the Circassians stop coming to Moscow and the descendants of the existing two lines, those of Iakov Kudenetovich and those of Mikhail Alekukovich, simply became Russian aristocrats with a distant and exotic origin. One example will suffice to demonstrate the beginning of this process. Around 1668 Prince Mikhail Iakovlevich Cherkasskii built a church on his estate at Ostankino, the Trinity Church which is one of the last of the purely traditional Russian churches to be built on an estate near Moscow. By the 1680's, like so many Russian boyars, his cultural orientation had shifted. He hired the famous Moldavian scholar, Nicolae Spafarii Milescu to teach his son Petr, possibly including Latin. Spafarii Milescu had spent much time in the West, and in fact was a purveyor not of Balkan Orthodox culture but mainly of that of the West. He served as a Latin translator for Artamon Matveev in the Ambassadorial Office in 1670-1676, working with the Danish ambassador. A textbook preface by Spafarii for the young Cherkasskii princes has extensive borrowings from the works of Simeon Polotskii (1629-1680), the Kiev-educated Belorussian monk. Simeon was the first Baroque poet in Russia as well as a major westernizing influence in the church after he

54. “Ein gantz unruhiger kopff, ein Tarterischer Mursa von gebuht,” P. Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, *op. cit.*: 130, 141-142, 149-151 (quotation, 150), 153, 159, 161; A. S. Lavrov, *Regentstvo tsarevny Sof'i Alekseevny: Sluzhiloe obshchestvo i bor'ba za vlast' v verkhakh Russkogo gosudarstva v 1682-1689 gg.* (Moscow, 1999): 162; J. G. Korb, *Diarium*, *op. cit.*: 73, 92, 101, 127, 131, 133, esp. 223; trans. E. Leingärtner, *Tagebuch*, *op. cit.*: 76, 91, 99, 121-122, 125, 127, esp. 268.





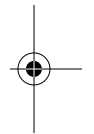
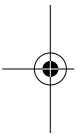
moved to Moscow in 1664.⁵⁵ In other words, Prince M. Ia. Cherkasskii was among those boyars who early turned to the west. The son of a man born a Muslim in Kabarda, as a Russian boyar he found the appropriate culture for his sons in Poland, the Ukraine, and Baroque Europe.

The ruling elite of the Russian state was not homogeneous, and included important minority elements from the nomadic and semi-nomadic Muslim peoples to the south. If the Tatars and to a lesser extent Nogais were the main source of such families in the sixteenth century, the Circassians replaced them from about 1590 until the very end of the seventeenth century. The Circassians came from several lineages, all more or less related to one another, from the leading princely clans at first and then from those who served the Russian tsar at first in Kabarda itself and later in Terskii gorodok. In Moscow they intermarried with the great aristocratic clans, including the Romanovs themselves before their ascent to the throne. They occupied leading positions in the Russian government and without any sort of monopoly, were often in charge of relations with the various peoples on the southern and eastern fringes of Russia. They did not simply fade into the Russian landscape. Their genealogies attest to their maintenance of relations with Kabarda and the circulation of information about those relations. The Circassians maintained solidarity among themselves, even when the blood ties were not especially close, interchanging property and taking care of new arrivals from the Caucasus. Keeping land in the family contributed to making them the richest boyar clan in the whole of Russia, quite a distinction for such recent arrivals.⁵⁶ The princes Cherkasskii even attracted to their orbit the Crimean Suleshovs, and certain Russian boyars such as Prince Boris Alekseevich Golitsyn seem to have taken a particular interest in them, intermarrying with them and taking in Kabardian princelings. The change of religion does not seem to have been an obstacle to the maintenance of those ties. As in the case of the Georgians at the Safavid court, the new religion did not preclude complex and on-going relations with their homeland. Rather it seems to have been a decline in the importance of Kabarda that loosened the connection to Russia. The Circassians increasingly fell under Crimean control, and the Caucasus seem to have been less significant for Russian policy until the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardzha.

Many questions remain. Why did the Circassians replace the Tatars and Nogais as the main non-Russian group in the ruling elite? If the change in religion did not sever their ties with Kabarda, what did it mean? The long list of icons and relics left by Prince Dmitrii Mamstriukovich to his heirs, like the church of the Trinity at Ostankino, are testimony to the typical piety of the Russian boyar. Why did the

55. Sebastian Kempgen, *Die Kirchen und Klöster Moskaus: Ein landeskundliches Handbuch* (Munich, 1994): 542; P. Bushkovitch, "Cultural change," *art. cit.*: 108.

56. The princely families from the upper Oka Lithuanian and Chernigov Riurikovichi, by contrast, did not maintain their wealth more successfully or in different fashion from clans of wholly Russian origin: R. O. Crummey, "Sources of boyar power in the seventeenth century: the descendants of the upper Oka serving princes," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, XXXIV, 1-2 (1993): 107-118.





European diplomats and travellers in Russia seem to see the Circassians as more foreign than the Russians themselves? Whatever the answers, the Circassian princes were not marginal. From the end of the sixteenth century to Peter's time, they were the most important group of aristocrats of foreign origin at the court of the Russian tsars. "Foreigners" did not arrive for the first time in Russian government with Peter the Great, and like the later Germans and other Europeans, the Kabardians were not only foreigners or only Russians, they were both. The Circassian murzas were also the Russian princes Cherkasskii.

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