Dancing the Nation in the North Caucasus

Sufian Zhemukhov and Charles King

In the realm of nations and nationalism, what are the limits of invention? With the upsurge in writing on Eurasian and east European nation building, we now know a great deal about the formulation and remaking of national categories, from the work of state-sponsored ethnographers to the struggle between incumbent and oppositional politicians.[1] Yet the persistent challenge, to paraphrase Karl Marx, is to understand exactly how and why people are unable to make their histories just as they please. Even though traditions may be invented and communities imagined, it is no simple task to identify the specific moments when these phenomena actually occur, especially when the inventing and imagining are not the mere result of government fiat or ethnographic creativity. Moreover, in our enthusiasm for deconstructing national belonging, it is easy to lose sight of the ways in which large numbers of people perform the ethnonational categories that scholars now assiduously unbuild. How might we map those precise points in time when decisions about national forms get negotiated by actors with little to gain from the process—apart from, so far as we can tell, a sincere wish to be somehow true to a collectively imagined past? What is at stake—culturally, historically, and even politically—when people decide to "do being ethnic" in one way and not another, and all within the context of a globalized, post-Soviet world?[2]

There is no clearer illustration of these phenomena than what might be called ethnokinetics, that is, forms of human motion that are locally categorized as essential to collective belonging—from "ethnic dance," to the forms of posture thought to be exemplary of a particular ethnonational category, to virtually any collective performance that valorizes bodies in motion. As a cultural form that is inherently grassroots, participatory, and infinitely recombinant, dance in particular pushes us to turn some of our attention away

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1. For a very small sample, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, 1993); Bruce Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas* (Princeton, 1995); Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge, Eng., 2002); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, 2001); Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, 2004); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and The Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, 2005).

2. See Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006).

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from state institutions and their challengers and toward the actions of average women and men who seem to be building the nation quite literally one step at a time. Within the Russian Federation and on the wider post-Soviet periphery, dance is also one of the most visible areas in which cultural activists are increasingly analyzing their own pasts as a matrix of "'civilizing process,' the control and regulation of 'disorderly' practices, and the profound reconfigurations of both local and European culture."[3]

This article examines the emergence and transformation of a communal dance form known as *adyge jegu* in historical Circassia, today the Russian republics of Adygeia, Karachaevo-Cherkesia, and Kabardino-Balkaria.[4] In the north Caucasus, collective dance has long been both an expression of communal identity and a forum for social mobilization and political dissent. The Nart sagas—the pan-Caucasus folk narratives involving the exploits of a prehuman population—contain passages that celebrate dance as an alternative to violence and a rubric for negotiating power relationships.[5] In mid-nineteenth-century Dagestan and Chechnia, the Qadiriya Sufi order introduced a style of ecstatic Islamic worship known as the *zikr,* an energetic male-only dance that is now taken to represent Chechen communal identity. During the Soviet period, a Caucasian "dance off" became a comic stand-in for male competitiveness, including in the emblematic filmic portrait of Caucasus rivalries, *Mimino* (1977). All these tropes, reinforced by official dance troupes, contributed to popular images of Caucasus regional culture, with leaping mountaineers and floating ladies gliding effortlessly across the stage.[6]

The modern adyge jegu—which might be translated as "Circassian festival"—emerged in 2005 in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. The adyge jegu took the form of young men and women gathering in a small park, later in a prominent square, to listen to live accordion music and participate in a highly rule-bound dance form: a kind of iterated pas de deux involving one man and one woman surrounded by onlookers. The adyge jegu quickly became the subject of both celebration and controversy. Local cultural activists and intellectuals hailed the spontaneous dances as evidence of national rebirth. Not long afterward, the republic was rocked by an unexplained terrorist

3. Susan A. Reed, "The Politics and Poetics of Dance," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 (1998): 506. On dance "revival," see Laura J. Olson, *Performing Russia: Folk Revival and Russian Identity* (London, 2004).

4. There is no widely accepted method for transliterating Circassian (Adyge, Adiga). Georges Dumézil and John Colarusso have devised phonemic inventories, but these are likely to be confusing to nonlinguists. Our transcription is a rough-and-ready spelling in Latin script based on Russian transliteration rules. The exceptions are our use of ' for the glottal stop and the Latin "j" for the sound normally transliterated as "dzh."

5. John Colarusso, *Nart Sagas from the Caucasus* (Princeton, 2002).

6. On representation and cultural tropes in the Caucasus, see Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917* (Montreal, 2002); Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge, Eng., 2005); Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford, 2008), chap. 3; Bruce Grant and Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, eds., *Caucasus Paradigms: Anthropologies, Histories and the Making of the World Area* (Münster, 2008); Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca, 2009).

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attack on local security services and government buildings in Nalchik. While purely coincidental occurrences, the mass dance movement and the threat to public order became entwined in public discourse and state responses. Political elites worried that the unsanctioned dance evenings might present a further threat to security. When the Nalchik authorities moved to prohibit the gathering, however, the resulting public outcry forced police to back down and allow the dances to go ahead—to date, one of the few examples of civil society's forcing the hand of the conservative and security-conscious administration of Kabardino-Balkaria.

In its modern form, the adyge jegu is a largely postcommunist cultural artifact, but it is not just another example of the malleable mash-up of ethnicity and performance art, a common phenomenon ranging from the "turbofolk" of Serbia to the "Hutsul punk" of Ukraine.[7] Rather, in very short order, the adyge jegu has become not just a thing that Circassians happen to do; it is today the single most identifiable feature of contemporary Circassian "national culture"—the signature "ethnocultural brand" for Circassians, according to one researcher.[8] Its popularity extends across the northwestern Caucasus and deep into the Circassian diaspora stretching from Turkey to New Jersey. The adyge jegu highlights the common tension between revival and invention, the way in which contemporary cultural entrepreneurs can at the same time desire to build something wholly new while being committed to getting their creation, somehow, right. But it also underscores a critical building block of authenticity within revivalist movements: the emergence of an authoritative voice—in this case, a distinctly Soviet one—that cultural entrepreneurs can use to justify their selection of some cultural forms as canonical and others as apocryphal.

In the sections that follow, we chart the history of the adyge jegu since 2005 as well as the ways cultural activists imagine the narrative of revival. We elucidate debates over the meaning of authenticity in contemporary Circassian nationalism and the nodal points where Soviet-era ethnographies were deployed in debates over the representation of Circassianness. We next present a snapshot of one odd but revealing episode: our own participant-observation in the (re)introduction of the bagpipe to Circassian dance music. We aim to provide a detailed archaeology of the decisions that enabled a cultural artifact to get constructed in one way but not another, while also highlighting the politics of authoritativeness in the creation of a canonical cultural

7. See Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*, 4th ed. (Boulder, Colo., 2002), chap. 7; David-Emil Wickström, "'Drive-Ethno-Dance' and 'Hutzul Punk': Ukrainian-Associated Popular Music and (Geo)politics in a Post-Soviet Context," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 40 (2008): 60–88; Wickström and Yngvar B. Steinholt, "Visions of the (Holy) Motherland in Contemporary Russian Popular Music: Nostalgia, Patriotism, Religion and Russkii Rok," *Popular Music and Society* 32, no. 3 (July 2009): 313–30; and *Dance and Music in Eastern Europe*, special issue of *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2004).

8. Z. M. Kesheva, "Tantseval'naia kul'tura kabardintsev kak istochnik formirovaniia sovremennogo etnokul'turnogo brenda," in V. K. Mal'kov and V. A. Tishkov, eds., *Kul'tura i prostranstvo* (Moscow, 2010), 2:152–72. See also Kesheva, *Tantseval'naia i muzykal'naia kul'tura kabardintsev vo vtoroi polovine XX veka: Istoriko-etnograficheskie aspekty* (Nalchik, 2005).

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form. The final section concludes with reflections on the notion of "national culture" in a global context.

Circassian Identity from Empire to the Post-Soviet Era

Soviet ethnographers divided Circassian-speakers into four major groups—Adygei, Cherkes, Kabardian, and Shapsug—based in large part on dialectal and geographical factors. But among Circassians themselves, there is a single ethnonym, adyge, and a general belief in a pandialectal cultural community. No religious tradition is common to all Circassians; some self-identify as Muslims, others as Orthodox Christians, and the practice of both faiths is infused with nonorthodox beliefs and customs. Yet there is an overarching commitment, at least in theory, to the often vague rules of *adyge khabze*, an informal code of right conduct. Adyge khabze has certain fixed principles of behavior, such as rising from one's chair as a sign of respect when someone else enters a room. But the commitment to rule-governed behavior as such, not the content of the rules themselves, is the defining element of such systems—a point that will become apparent in the history of the adyge jegu.

Circassians also point to a common historical experience as critical in forging a common sense of destiny. In the last phase of the Russian wars of conquest in the Caucasus, Circassian populations south of the Kuban River and in the valleys leading up from the Black Sea were systematically expelled from the Russian empire or relocated to lowland areas in the north. On the order of half a million Circassians were removed from 1860 to 1864, many of whom ended up on crowded ships heading for the Ottoman empire; further populations fled in the wake of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878.[9] Demographic changes during the late imperial and Soviet periods, including the immigration of ethnic Russians to the north Caucasus, further diminished the Circassian share of local populations. By 2010 only Kabardino-Balkaria had a Circassian (Kabardian) majority—516,826 (57.2 percent) of the republican population—while Circassians (Adygei and Cherkes) accounted for 124,835 (25.2 percent) and 73,184 (11.9 percent) of the populations of Adygeia and Karachaevo-Cherkesia, respectively.

Circassian national narratives stress the unity of Circassian-speakers in the northwest Caucasus, as well as their spiritual ties to the sizeable Circassian diaspora in Turkey, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Political unity was historically rare, however. Lowland Kabardia was allied to Muscovy through dynastic marriage as early as 1561, when Ivan IV took a Kabardian princess, Guashchenei (Maria), as his wife—a bond symbolized by her statue standing in the central square in Nalchik. Yet Circassian princes farther to the west, in the highlands beyond the Kuban River, were the final holdouts against the Russian state. It was not until 1864—and largely as a result of the Russian state's policy of what would now be called ethnic cleansing—that Circassian resistance was at last quashed.

In the nineteenth century, to Russian strategists as well as Romantic poets and novelists, the term *Circassian—cherkes*—became a byword for brigand and guerrilla fighter. Early Circassian intellectuals were well aware of the

9. King, *Ghost of Freedom*, 96.

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way in which they were perceived by Russian officialdom, and some subaltern elites worked to craft a story of common heritage and destiny within the context of the wider empire. In 1844 Shora Nogma completed the first general history of the Circassians.[10] Nogma's work fit the standard trope of nineteenth-century empire-making, arguing that the Circassians, while a distinct people, were tied fundamentally to Russia. Khan-Girei, another local intellectual who made his career within the Russian imperial bureaucracy, likewise argued for Circassians' links with Russia but emphasized the variety of customs and social structures among the Circassians themselves.[11] More than with most groups in the north Caucasus, the idea of Circassians as a distinct nation was influenced by the work—and obsessions—of outsiders. In the first half of the nineteenth century, British strategy toward Russia entailed support for the Circassian resistance, and British spies were a particular concern to St. Petersburg.[12] Moreover, for European writers and artists, Circassian men and, especially, women were long held to represent the ideal of human beauty. Aleksandr Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, and others likewise portrayed the Circassian as either a naïf of refined nobility or a lithe and desirable woman. Music and dance frequently figured into these representations. Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik* (Captive of the Caucasus, 1823) features Circassian maidens' singing of the dangers presented to Cossack sentinels by Chechen raiders. Milii Balakirev's well-known piano fantasy "Islamey" (1869), frequently performed by Franz Liszt, is a classical rendering of a traditional Circassian dance. Visitors and natives alike reported the use of collective dances to buck up warriors before doing battle against imperial forces arrayed along the defensive line of the Kuban River, even though local Islamic authorities sometimes discouraged the practice as irreligious.[13]

During the Soviet period, this complex history was fused into a more or less coherent set of narratives that maintained the distinctiveness of each of the language family's subgroups and identified communal dance as the most appropriate arena in which pan-Caucasus commonalities should be valorized and represented. The first Soviet-era Circassian musical group, the Kabardino-Balkarian Song and Dance Ensemble, was formed in Nalchik in 1933, eventually headed by the Georgian dancer Mikhail Chochishvili. From its inception, the official ensemble incorporated dances from across the north Caucasus and

10. Sh. B. Nogmov, *Istoriia adykheiskogo naroda* (Nalchik, 1994).

11. Sufian Zhemukhov, *Filosofiia istorii Shory Nogma* (Nalchik, 2007); and Zhemukhov, *Mirovozzrenie Khan-Gireia* (Nalchik, 2007). See also Michael Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices: Loyalty and Betrayal in the Russian Conquest of the North Caucasus* (Ithaca, 2011).

12. Charles King, "Imagining Circassia: David Urquhart and the Making of North Caucasus Nationalism," *Russian Review* 66, no. 2 (April 2007): 238–55. See also Paul Manning, "Just Like England: On the Liberal Institutions of the Circassians," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 3 July (2009): 590–618.

13. E. Taitbout de Marigny, *Three Voyages in the Black Sea to the Coast of Circassia* (London, 1837); Frédéric Dubois de Montpéreux, *Voyage autour du Caucase*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1839–1843); J. A. Longworth, *A Year among the Circassians*, 2 vols. (London, 1840); James Stanislaus Bell, *Journal of a Residence in Circassia, during the years 1837, 1838, and 1839*, 2 vols. (London, 1840); Adyl'-Girei Keshev, "Kharakter adygskikh pesen," in Keshev, *Zapiski cherkesa* (Nalchik, 1988); Sufian Zhemukhov, "Kabardinskii fol'klor kak istoricheskii istochnik," *Nauchnaia mysl' Kavkaza*, no. 7 (2007): 222–40.

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later added dance forms associated with the south Caucasus as well. Similar groups were established in other parts of the northwest Caucasus throughout the 1930s.

As a form of performance art meant to be watched—not a participatory affair—these official ensembles developed parallel to Circassian dance as a lived tradition. The increasing professionalization of dance training widened the gulf between what was labeled "Circassian national dance" and the dances actually performed by Circassians themselves. Collective dance was a normal component of major Circassian celebrations, such as weddings or Soviet festivals, but these highly participatory events contrasted sharply with the spectator-oriented forms of dance being developed by Soviet professionals. At the same time, spontaneous dance forms were themselves undergoing profound changes, becoming less rule-bound and, according to some contemporary observers, "degraded" via the withering of the role of the dance master, or *jeguak'ue*, in governing the event. As dance became something to be watched, rather than something to be enacted by enthusiastic nonprofessionals, younger Circassians in the 1970s and 1980s came to complain that their access to collective dance events had been usurped by an increasingly staged art form.[14]

In 1965 the official republican ensemble in Kabardino-Balkaria was renamed Kabardinka and, along with other official groups in Adygeia and Karachaevo-Cherkesia, focused on the fusion of classical, ballet-inspired choreography in the performance of "ethnic" dances. Dance became commodified as a form of socialist entertainment, another arena in which the notion of the Soviet Union as a patchwork of distinct but friendly nationalities could be reproduced.[15] State-supported dance ensembles gave a nod to the countryside—by incorporating moves that mimicked allegedly ancient hunting practices, agricultural labor, or courtship rituals—but this highly stylized mode of expression had the effect of both highlighting the peculiarities of a particular Soviet nationality while at the same time slotting all of them into the same aesthetic mold.[16] This interweaving of dance, identity, and politics came to be graphically represented in central Nalchik. In 1957 the statue erected to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of Ivan IV's dynastic marriage to the Circassian princess Guashchenei was modeled on Sonia Sherieva, one of the republic's most prominent dancers.[17]

In 1963 schools in the Circassian national areas switched to Russian as the language of instruction, and regional history was eliminated as a subject from school curricula. Local scholars associated with higher educational in-

14. Zarema Kesheva, "K voprosu o sostoianii traditsionnoi muzykal'noi i tantsetval'noi kul'tury gorodskikh kabardintsev," in *Materialy mezhdunarodnoi iubileinoi nauchnoi konferentsii "Rossiia i Kavkaz," Vladikavkaz, 6–7 October 2009*, 200–205, at kvkz.ru/stati/2569-k-voprosu-o-sostoyanii-tradicionnoy-muzykalnoy-i-tancevalnoy-kultury-gorodskih-kabardincev.html (last accessed 1 March 2013).

15. See Anthony Shay, *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation, and Power* (Middletown, 2002).

16. Sh. S. Shu, *Narodnye tantsy adygov* (Nalchik, 1992), 16–18; M. M. Beshkok, *Adygskii fol'klornyi tanets* (Maikop, 1990), 73, 105.

17. F. F. Kharaeva and V. L. Molov, "Cherkesskoe iskusstvo," in M. A. Kumakhov, ed., *Adygskaia (Cherkesskaia) entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 2006), 632.

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stitutions in Nalchik and with the republican branches of the Soviet Academy of Sciences produced the standard array of studies connecting the history of the republics with the major nodal points in the Soviet historical narrative. But from the early 1970s forward, deep if coded debates also took place over the meaning of authenticity in Circassian national culture. The most important of these concerned what came to be called "syncretism" (*sinkretizm*) in the foundational text of Circassian nationalism, Nogma's nineteenth-century *Istoriia adykheiskogo naroda* (History of the Circassian People).[18] In a major reinterpretation of Nogma's theoretical stance, the local academician and folklorist Zaur Naloev argued that Nogma's work was less an example of "scientific history" than a creative chronicle of the past viewed through the prism of Nogma's own interests and ideas—in other words, in the language of the time, a "subjective" account of the Circassian past.[19]

Naloev was roundly criticized by other local scholars. Among them was a respected ethnographer, Barasbi Bgazhnokov, who rejected what he viewed as the diminution of Nogma's status as an authentic source for Circassian history. In a 1982 review article in *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, Bgazhnokov argued that Nogma's work could have both literary significance—as a work of creative genius—as well as absolute historical significance as a source for Circassian "cultural history."[20] The admixture of established fact and creative interpretation was not evidence of Nogma's weak methodology but rather a route toward genuinely important historical reconstruction. At the time, Bgazhnokov's intervention was only one of many against Naloev's views, a series of debates played out in learned journals and private conversations from Nalchik to Moscow. In the early 1990s, the leading scholar focusing on Nogma, Tugan Kumykov, eventually denounced Naloev's expertise in his preface to the two hundredth anniversary edition of Nogma's text, effectively closing the door on a debate that had been ongoing for the previous two decades and defending Nogma as the principal font of knowledge on Circassian history and culture.[21] As it turned out, however, the effective legitimation of "syncretism" as an approach to authentic knowledge about the national past—that is, mixing fact with creative reinterpretation—would become a core element of the later development of the Circassian national movement. At the center of these developments was Naloev's early critic, Bgazhnokov himself.

The Rise of the Adyge Jegu

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Bgazhnokov's 1991 book *Cherkesskoe igrishche* (The Circassian Festival).[22] A study of the history and poetics of Circassian communal dance from the nineteenth through the twen-

18. Nogmov, *Istoriia adykheiskogo naroda*.

19. Zaur Naloev, *Iz istorii kul'tury adygov* (Nalchik, 1978). For similar views, see L. I. Lavrov, "Ob interpretatsii Sh. B. Nogmovym kabardinskogo fol'klora," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 2 (1969): 136–41.

20. B. Kh. Bgazhnokov, "O novom etape v izuchenii kul'turnoi istorii adygov," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1 (1982): 160–63.

21. Nogmov, *Istoriia adykheiskogo naroda*, 15.

22. B. Kh. Bgazhnokov, *Cherkesskoe igrishche: Siuzhet, semantika, mantika* (Nalchik, 1991).

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tieth centuries, Bgazhnokov's work was the first attempt to systematize the lineage of folk dance forms among the Circassians and to record what the author saw as the essential rules that accompanied the authentic folk idiom. *The Circassian Festival* set its subject apart from the state-sponsored dance troupes that, at the time, were the only venue in which distinctly "national" cultural forms were likely to be encountered. Yet it also distinguished Circassian national dance from the more informal, spontaneous activities that might emerge at weddings or other private gatherings—precisely those dance forms that some observers described as "degraded." Instead, Bgazhnokov saw as his task the resurrection of a lost tradition of communal dance that was not influenced by Russian or Georgian ballet—the two dominant influences on Kabardinka and other Circassian dance troupes—nor diluted by dance styles inspired by Soviet popular music and youth culture.

Bgazhnokov portrays the Circassian festival—using the Russian term *igrishche* as a translation of the Circassian *jegu*—as a mass event with articulable rules governing time, space, ethics, and aesthetics. The centerpiece is a public dance with prescribed standards governing gender relations in the dance circle, propriety during the dance, and appropriate music. According to Bgazhnokov, the classic form of the jegu is overseen by a single male dance master, whom Bgazhnokov labeled the *kh'etiiak'ue*, often with female and male assistants. The kh'etiiak'ue is the chief authority figure in the dance and has the power to determine the music, organize the crowd, and most importantly select male and female dance partners.

The main action takes place in the middle of a large circle formed by the attendees. Only a single couple is permitted to dance at one time. The partners are not normally allowed to choose each other (although in some Circassian dance forms, the male partner may approach the female and, with a bow, invite her to dance); rather, the kh'etiiak'ue leads the couple to the center of the circle and places them in a starting position facing one another. From that point, the dance is more informal, with much depending on the speed and style of the music. Couples may choose a more energetic dance, the *isl"amei*, or a slower, more deliberate one usually dubbed the "noble," or *uerk"*, style. The most talented dancers are those whose movement is judged to be most stately or daring for males, and most fluid and graceful for females. Males who are able to dance on point—one of the characteristics of several dance traditions in the Caucasus—are especially prized.

The music accompanying the jegu varies in form and instrumentation but normally includes some combination of accordions, a drum (*bereban*), and a type of wooden castanet known as the *pkh"ets'ych*. Before the spread of the accordion in Circassia in the late nineteenth century, the central chordal and melodic instruments in the ensemble would have been the primitive fiddle, or *shyk'epshyne* (a bowed instrument with two or more strings, played upright like a cello, and widely dispersed throughout the eastern Black Sea and northwest Caucasus regions); a triangular lyre, or *pshyne dyk"uak"ue* (still in use on both slopes of the northwest Caucasus range, in Circassia and Georgian Svaneti); and perhaps the long flute, or caval (*nak"yre*).

The irony in Bgazhnokov's work is that, at the time *The Circassian Festival* appeared, all of the things he describes were barely in evidence. His work

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is based not on observing contemporary ethnographic practice but on the memories of informants and on an extensive reading of folkloric and historical literatures. By the time he sat down to write, self-consciously "Circassian" dance as such was mainly in evidence in Kabardinka and other official dance ensembles, which observed few of the rules that he sought to codify. But the importance of his research lay not in systematizing an extinct dance tradition. Rather, its significance lay in the sociological uses to which Bgazhnokov's text itself would eventually be put. That influence is apparent in the semantics of dance culture as it developed in Kabardino-Balkaria in the 1990s. The very term *adyge jegu* was not a label rediscovered by younger Circassians from Bgazhnokov's research. In fact, that term never appears in the body of *The Circassian Festival.* Writing in Russian, Bgazhnokov consistently uses the Russian term *igrishche*—festival, merrymaking, carnival—as the moniker for the set of lost cultural practices that he sought to codify. Instead, the phrase "adyge jegu" is simply a back translation into Circassian of "cherkesskoe igrishche," the Russian title of Bgazhnokov's 1991 book.

How did the Russian-language title of a rather obscure piece of historical ethnography end up as the defining feature of Circassian national culture? The first adyge jegu was held in September 2005 in Walnut Grove Park (Orekhovaia roshcha), a public space in central Nalchik. The organizers, mainly ethnic Circassians in their twenties, had begun to connect via chat rooms on www.kavkazweb.net. These young men and women were the first generation to have experienced education in republican schools in the Circassian language as well as the introduction of history and culture classes in urban schools in the early 1990s. The organizers chose to craft the event in ways that both underscored its ethnic character while also establishing clear guidelines for how similar events should be conducted. They restricted the event to dances and music that they deemed to be essentially Circassian, as opposed to dance forms coded as attached to other ethnic categories in the Caucasus, such as the Chechens, Balkars, and Georgians. The event began with a solemn procession of the Circassian national flag (that is, the green arrow-and-stars emblem rather than the Russian federal flag or the republican flag of Kabardino-Balkaria). Attendees were mainly friends or relatives of the organizers, which also included ethnic Circassian students from Syria, Turkey, and Jordan who were then studying at the local university.

Zalina Sherieva, a local English teacher and one of the original organizers, regarded the attraction of young people from the diaspora as one of the goals of the adyge jegu. Yet in an interview on the origins of the event, she also pointed to the difficulty that organizers had in deciding how exactly to "revive" a tradition that had long been lost. The source, according to Sherieva, was Bgazhnokov's *The Circassian Festival,* which the organizers explicitly used as a handbook for determining the authenticity of the rules governing the event.[23] Sherieva herself became the female master of ceremonies for the dance, ushering women into the circle, while a male colleague performed the corresponding role for men. Music included two accordionists and two

23. Zalina Dzagashtova, "Chtoby potantsevat', trebuetsia razpreshenie administratsii goroda," *Kabardino-Balkarskaia pravda,* 5 August 2006.

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percussionists. Around fifty people attended the first evening's dance, which began around six o'clock in the evening and continued until sundown.[24]

The first adyge jegu was so successful that organizers made the event a weekly affair, usually on Wednesdays. Early in the process, Sherieva and her colleagues elaborated "twelve rules of the adyge jegu," one for each of the stars on the Circassian national flag and based on a creative synthesis of Bgazhnokov's scholarly text—an exercise in precisely the "syncretism" that had been at the center of the Naloev debate over three decades earlier. These included:

1. Only Circassian and Abkhaz music is to be performed.
2. Dancers should be dressed properly in accordance with Circassian norms: women should not dance in trousers; young men should not dance in shorts or bare feet.
3. Spectators should support the dancers by clapping. They must refrain from smoking, nibbling sunflower seeds, spitting, etc.
4. Young men stand to the right of the musicians; women stand to the left. Onlookers stand opposite the musicians.
5. The dance master, or kh'etiiak'ue, announces the start of the dance and opens it by blowing a ritual horn three times.
6. The kh'etiiak'ue is the male master of ceremonies of the adyge jegu. He opens the dance, directs its procedures, ushers the male dancers into the circle, and accompanies them out of the circle. The female usher, or *pshchashche desh*, plays the same role for the women.
7. At the beginning of the dance, the kh'etiiak'ue and pshchashche desh come to the center of the circle and ceremonially present the main musical instrument, such as the accordion, to the musicians. The audience accompanies the procession with hand-clapping.
8. Only one couple at a time may dance in the circle, except during the mass performance of the sacred dance known as the *uj*.
9. Men dance only at the direction of the kh'etiiak'ue. Women are similarly invited only by the pshchashche desh. The male and female dancers circle each other to the left before starting their dance.
10. Men must keep their hands in the form of a clenched or open fist. Dancing with protruding fingers is prohibited. Women must not lift their hands above their shoulders. At the end of the dance, the man and woman depart the circle facing each other and return to their original places. As they exit, they are accompanied by the kh'etiiak'ue and pshchashche desh.
11. If someone breaks these rules, the kh'etiiak'ue may stop the music and point out the mistake.
12. The adyge jegu ends with the sacred dance known as the uj. There can be no further dances after the uj.[25]

The rule-bound nature of the adyge jegu clearly distinguishes it from other spontaneous forms of dance or merrymaking. In practice all these rules are in fact meta-rules. The kh'etiiak'ue and pshchashche desh are cast as the supreme authority in determining the content of all the other rules, for exam-

24. Kesheva, "K voprosu o sostoianii."

25. Zhanset Shurdym, "Adyge jegu i ego znachenie v sovremennoi zhizni," *Khekure khabzere*, no. 2 (4 November 2008), at virt-circassia.ucoz.com/_ld/0/23_2_nomer.pdf (last accessed 1 March 2013).

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ple, what counts as "Circassian music," or as appropriate dress, or as a male dancer's making an acceptable fist. Nevertheless, the very terms *kh'etiiak'ue* and *pshchashche desh* did not exist in Kabardino-Balkaria before 2005 (although Bgazhnokov does record the former as one of many possible names given to the male master of ceremonies among other Circassian groups). They were created precisely in order to provide an authoritative voice, with an indigenized and allegedly antique name, that could enforce the rules. As Sherieva explained, the adyge jegu was intended to serve both instructional and revivalist functions. "This is a teaching moment," she said. "If a woman is not dressed properly, the kh'etiiak'ue will not let her dance. That is why you will not see ladies of a vulgar appearance at our jegu."[26]

From its origins in the fall of 2005, the adyge jegu quickly spread to Adygeia and Karachaevo-Cherkesia, as well as much farther afield. Circassian students in Moscow and St. Petersburg began to rent out public spaces to stage similar activities. Public sporting events began to feature an adyge jegu as part of the opening and closing ceremonies.[27] Local scholars—including Bgazhnokov himself—argued for capitalizing on this momentum to organize classes in "proper" dance styles for local schools, as well as to engage in further ethnographic work to uncover previously hidden dance traditions supposedly existing in the countryside. Some even suggested the creation of a regular, state-supported adyge jegu as a way of propagating proper dance etiquette among Circassian youth.[28]

A month after the opening of the adyge jegu, the terrorist attack on security services in downtown Nalchik led to the voluntary cessation of the event. The organizers of the dance felt that continuing with the event would be inappropriate in light of the killing of around a hundred civilians and security personnel. But when organizers attempted to restart it in 2006, they found the political landscape radically changed. Local security services were particularly wary of large groups of young people gathering in one place. The city authorities informed the organizers that a permit would be required to carry on with the dance, a virtually insurmountable obstacle given that the organizers had few connections to powerful people in the municipal bureaucracy. Local authorities further advised the organizers that they should avoid becoming suspected nationalists; they should consider getting rid of the Circassian flag and use the Russian one for the initial procession, for example, or performing dances connected to other ethnic groups in the Caucasus rather than exclusively Circassian ones. Organizers rejected this advice, however, arguing that these innovations would undermine the very essence of the adyge jegu as a genuinely Circassian event.[29] Support eventually came from an unexpected source: the editor-in-chief of the government's own daily newspaper, *Adyge psal''e* (Circassian Word). The editor, the respected local activist Mukhamed

26. Dzagashtova, "Chtoby potantsevat'."

27. Andemir Kanov, "Spartakiadu otkryli narodnye igrishcha," *Kabardino-Balkarskaia pravda*, 27 September 2006.

28. Kesheva, "K voprosu o sostoianii."

29. Luriza Orazaeva, "'Cherkesskii kongress': Ekstremizmu na Severnom Kavkaze mozhet protivostoiat' natsional'naia ideologiia," *Kavkazskii uzel* (1 November 2007), at www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/126552/ (last accessed 1 March 2013).

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Khafitse, became the unofficial spokesperson for the adyge jegu organizers, giving considerable attention to their fight with the local authorities in his pages.[30] Soon, the city administration relented and allowed the organizers to move from Walnut Grove Park to the more capacious Abkhaz Square, the largest open space in central Nalchik. By October 2006 the republic's president, Arsen Kanokov, could even be seen dancing in public himself.[31]

Authorities in neighboring republics followed suit, at first worrying about the rise of unofficial public gatherings before realizing that allowing the event could be a way of garnering political support from the local population. In Maikop, the capital of Adygeia, police attempted to break up an adyge jegu organized on New Year's Eve in 2009 in the city's central square. After public protest, the local administration allocated a designated area of the city for future dances. By the fall of 2010, a major international festival of Circassian culture in Maikop, organized by the local ministry of culture, opened and closed with an adyge jegu as an allegedly primeval expression of Circassian identity.[32]

Nation, Dance, and Authenticity

From the writings of an ethnographer who spanned the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, to dance as a form of public merrymaking, to political uncertainty and the appropriation of national forms by local officials—the strange history of the adyge jegu illustrates the twists and turns of identity construction in the north Caucasus. But just as young men and women were turning to Bgazhnokov's writings as a textbook for inventing ancient traditions, debates continued over the proper meaning of authenticity. Two approaches to dance—the revivified version of the Soviet-era dance troupe Kabardinka and a new ensemble known as Khatti—illustrate the complexities of "tradition" in a rapidly shifting cultural and political context. Both saw themselves, like the adyge jegu organizers in Abkhaz Square, as reaching back into a distant past to revive the spirit of national traditions, but both also offered contrasting approaches to the construction of authentic practice.

After 1991 the demise of the transrepublican network of "national" ensembles pushed Kabardinka toward rethinking its philosophy of Circassian

30. Dzagashtova, "Chtoby potantsevat'."

31. Ekaterina Tolasova, "Pervaia prezidentskaia kafa," *Kabardino-Balkarskaia pravda*, 11 October 2006.

32. "Kul'turnaia zhizn' regionov iuga Rossii i stran Zakavkaz'ia v 2010 godu," *Kavkazskii uzel*, 7 January 2011, at www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/179195/ (last accessed 1 March 2013); "'Adyge Khase' vyiasniaet, kto i pochemu zapretil 'Adyge jegu' v novogodniuiu noch' v Maikope," *Kavkazskii uzel*, 28 January 2010, at www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/164779/ (last accessed 1 March 2013); "Press-reliz po itogam V mezhdunarodnogo festivalia adygskoi kul'tury," at www.adigea.aif.ru/culture/news/29361 (last accessed 1 March 2013). See also Bella Ksalova, "V Karachaevo-Cherkesii cherkesskaia molodezh' vozrozhdaet natsional'nye tantseval'nye obychai," *Kavkazskii uzel*, 22 July 2010, at www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/171977/ (last accessed 1 March 2013); and Asia Kapaeva, "Zhiteli Karachaevo-Cherkesii, Kabardino-Balkarii i Adygei prazdnuiut Den' cherkesskogo flaga," *Kavkazskii uzel*, 25 April 2012, at www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/205562/ (last accessed 1 March 2013).

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dance. Ensemble members could no longer count on the standard array of state-organized extravaganzas nor were they any longer limited by the classical, ballet-inspired styles that had dominated all-Soviet approaches to national cultural forms. Auladin Dumanishev, the chief choreographer of Kabardinka during most of the 1990s, looked back to Soviet-era scholarship as a way of remaking the ensemble's repertoire, rejecting the classicism of the past and seeking to root the repertoire in moves and melodies seen as more typically local. A fundamental source became the three-volume *Folk Songs and Instrumental Melodies of the Circassians*, published in 1980 but rarely used by choreographers before 1991.[33]

Under Dumanishev's leadership, Kabardinka also came to abandon the idea of incorporating dance forms from across the Caucasus—part of the troupe's history going back to the 1930s—and focused instead on dances that were cast as quintessentially Circassian. The ensemble also engaged in its own version of ethnographic categorization, elaborating the distinctions between regional subgroups from Greater Kabardia, Lesser Kabardia, the Kabardians of Mozdok, and the Bzhedug, Shapsug, and Ubykh groups of western Circassia. New musical arrangements were crafted to incorporate the shyk'epshyne, or primitive fiddle, in addition to the more common accordion. New costumes dispensed with the highly stylized Soviet-era dress in favor of versions taken from nineteenth-century prints of Circassian soldiers and women.

When the new program premiered in Nalchik in August 1993, the event was something of a sensation. Not only did the staging and choreography mark a radical departure from the predictability of a "national" show during the Soviet period, but a new dance known as the *uerk" k"afe*, or dance of the nobility, created a new narrative of aristocratic bearing that would have been difficult to stage in a socialist context.[34] As with the later adyge jegu, Kabardinka valorized dignity as an essential component of proper Circassian style. Good taste and civilized bearing were consciously opposed to the proletarian and egalitarian values of the Soviet past. Male dancers were prohibited from splaying their fingers, for example, while women were instructed to keep their hands always below shoulder height—movements that were thought to embody propriety and refined behavior. Scores of professional and amateur dance groups in the Caucasus and among the Circassian diaspora followed Kabardinka's example. Dumanishev was recognized for his professional achievement and named "People's Artist of Kabardino-Balkaria" in 1994. Kazbek Balkarov, one of his students and a major figure in republican dance in his own right, described Dumanishev's methods: "Auladin Dumanishev taught me love for Circassian dance when I performed with Kabardinka. He brought us together regularly and lectured on Circassian history, folklore, and culture. He talked so eloquently that I lost interest in anything else. Since then, I have felt a strong love for my people. And that was Auladin's gift."[35]

33. V. Kh. Baragunov and Z. P. Kardangushev, eds., *Narodnye pesni i instrumental'nye naigryshi adygov*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1980–1984). See also Zarema Kesheva, "Pochemu ne sostoialsia teatr adygskogo tantsa?" *Kabardino-Balkarskaia pravda*, 8 November 2006.

34. Kesheva, "Pochemu ne sostoialsia."

35. Tambii Gueshchmakhue, "Ukhet ue, kh'et?" *Psyne*, no. 8 (2009): 91.

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Dumanishev's star fell as quickly as it rose, however. In 1998 he was dismissed from his position as the head of the dance troupe, part of a government-ordered reconfiguration of cultural and artistic institutions in the republic.[36] Dumanishev's decline coincided with the general suppression of expressions of ethnic sentiment in the republic in the late 1990s. By this stage, the national movement that had attended the end of the Soviet Union—and which had pushed Naloev, Bgazhnokov, Dumanishev, and others into positions of prominence—had waned. Bgazhnokov's calls for ethnic revival, even deploying the language of colonialism as a critique of Russian policy in the north Caucasus, were increasingly perceived by the local administration as dangerously radical.[37] While public intellectuals and artists had, for much of the 1990s, been central figures in the public life of the republic, their role soon fell victim to a republican-level administration most concerned with state security and delivering up votes for central candidates in legislative elections.[38]

Paradoxically, the state's attack on Kabardinka eventually opened new avenues for non-state-supported dance troupes to emerge. Especially once political change in the republic brought a new elite to power—with the younger businessman Arsen Kanokov replacing the aging Valerii Kokov as president in 2005—other organizations were freer to challenge the old hegemony represented by Kabardinka. The adyge jegu movement was one manifestation of this relative thaw, but quite another was the establishment of a formal dance ensemble known as Khatti.

Khatti was founded by the dancer and choreographer Kazbek Balkarov, who recruited his members from Dumanishev's dance school, K"an, and was himself one of Dumanishev's former acolytes. Balkarov continued his teacher's quest for ethnic authenticity, though his approach was substantially different. "First of all, we realized that Circassian dance needs to be pulled out of the frozen state in which it has existed for the past several decades," Balkarov said in an interview. "I wanted our culture to gain a new kind of life."[39] Khatti represented an effort to do two things at once: to reach back into the deep mists of the Circassian past, toward a pre-Russian and allegedly more ethnically pure era, while also innovating in ways that reinterpreted the essential values and forms of Circassian dance for a new age. As with the adgye jegu movement and Kabardinka, however, the liaison with local intellectuals was critical to Khatti's work. Zaur Kozhev, Feliks Nakov, and Zuber Evaz—younger historians and ethnographers at the Institute for Humanities Research in Nalchik, the local affiliate of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as well as at the National Museum of Kabardino-Balkaria—assisted Balkarov in designing costumes, especially those that rejected the imperial-era *cherkeska*

36. Postanovlenie Pravitel'stva KBR, "O reformirovanii deiatel'nosti uchrezhdenii iskusstva i kul'tury," no. 454 (1998).

37. See B. Kh. Bgazhnokov, "Etnicheskii krizis v novoi i noveishei istorii adygov," *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, nos. 2–3 (1999).

38. On the national movement in Kabardino-Balkaria, see Georgi M. Derluguian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago, 2005).

39. Gueshchmakhue, "Ukhet," 93.

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for pre-Russian garments derived from early nineteenth-century prints and museum artifacts.[40]

As with Bgazhnokov's influence on the adyge jegu movement, however, Khatti's real sources lay in the Soviet period. The group's name references the ancient Anatolian civilization of Hatti, a people believed to have predated the later Hittites, in the third and second millennium B.C.E. The supposed link between the Hatti and the northwest Caucasus was popularized by the Soviet Abkhaz linguist and historian Vladislav Ardzinba, whose *Ritualy i mify drevnei Anatolii* (Rituals and Myths of Ancient Anatolia, 1982) became a standard text.[41] Ardzinba's claim was that Hatti and Caucasus languages such as Abkhaz and Circassian contained sufficient similarities to conclude that the peoples of the northwest Caucasus were, in some measure, descendants of pre-Hittite peoples pushed to the north out of Anatolia by the Indo-European Hittite invasions of the second millennium B.C.E.

Ardzinba's evidence was sketchy—like that of most "language dreamers," as Rebecca Gould has termed them.[42] His claim was based almost exclusively on the prevalence of place-names or tribal designations containing some combination of /khet/. But in the end it was less his scholarly arguments than his political career that popularized Ardzinba's writings north of the Caucasus Mountains. In the early 1990s, Ardzinba rose to the position of chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia. From that post, he directed the Abkhaz drive for independence that led to the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992–1993, a conflict that sealed his place as president of his own unrecognized country. During that conflict, more than a thousand volunteers from Circassian republics crossed the mountains to fight on the Abkhaz side. These personal connections, as well as the wide local coverage given to the Georgian-Abkhaz war throughout the northwest Caucasus, made Ardzinba a household name in the region.

Balkarov's appropriation of Ardzinba's ideas is thus not surprising. Khatti's costumes, music, and choreography seek to portray the group's work as more archaic, more rooted, than that of Kabardinka or other dance ensembles. No one knows what the people of ancient Hatti might have worn, of course, but the solution for Khatti was simply to design costumes based on pictures from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when the emblematic cherkeska did yet not have its typical gunpowder vials or cartridge slots on the chest. "You may notice that Khatti's music is 'unfamiliar,'" Balkarov explained.[43] But the point was to produce a sound and style of dance that suggested deep antiquity, leapfrogging over the Russian empire to appropriate a more grounded past—a form of "archaic modernism," in Balkarov's words.[44]

40. Marianna Gendugova, "Kazbek Balkarov: 'Khatti—eto odna bol'shaia druzhnaia sem'ia,'" Circassa.ru and Adigam.com, 23 February 2009, at www.aheku.org/page.php?id=1793 (last accessed 1 March 2013); and Mar'iane Zhemykh"ue, "Kh'ets'yk'u Madine i fashchekhemre i shchekhukhemre," *Adyge psal"e*, 17 August 2011.

41. V. G. Ardzinba, *Ritualy i mify drevnei Anatolii* (Moscow, 1982).

42. Rebecca Gould, "Language Dreamers: Race and the Politics of Etymology in the Caucasus," in Grant and Yalçın-Heckmann, eds., *Caucasus Paradigms*, 143–66.

43. Gueshchmakhue, "Ukhet," 92.

44. Gendugova, "Kazbek Balkarov."

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In addition to inspiring Khatti, Ardzinba's theories also had an impact on the adyge jegu (an event in which Khatti's dancers participated from the beginning). First, the event's organizers were careful, in their enumeration of the new rules of the adyge jegu, to include both Circassian and Abkhaz music as the only acceptable accompaniments to the dance. This stipulation underscored the kinship between Circassians and Abkhaz that Ardzinba had taken for granted, in his scholarship and in his politics. Second, the choice of the term *kh'etiiak'ue* for the dance master—a term that contains the /khet/ root—created a linguistic link between the Hatti of ancient Anatolia and the modern adyge jegu. The more obvious term for the dance master might have been *jeguak'ue* (cf. jegu), a label already widely used in the region for a master of ceremonies at communal merrymaking. But in this small way, Ardzinba's legacy and Bgazhnokov's ethnography came together: the person in charge of the adyge jegu was given a title that manifestly emphasized the antiquity of a self-evidently (re)created cultural form.

How the Bagpipe Came (Back) to Circassia

So far we have engaged in a kind of archaeology of invented tradition—identifying the nodal points at which cultural actors made conscious choices about dance forms and turned to Soviet-era scholarship as the basis for their work. But in conducting our own research, we found ourselves oddly caught up in the very cultural construction we had been attempting to understand and analyze. Eventually our own participant-observation in Kabardino-Balkaria and the way in which our attempt to engage local cultural activists associated with the adyge jegu led us in an unexpected direction.

Sufian Zhemukhov was based in Nalchik throughout the period we describe, but on his second visit to the region in August 2007, Charles King brought along a peculiar musical instrument: a (Scottish) Highland bagpipe which he plays semiprofessionally. He had no particular goal in mind, other than perhaps to play the instrument with some local musicians and to provide an intriguing entrée to a very different folk tradition for local interlocutors. King was also aware of the existence of indigenous bagpipes south of the Caucasus Mountains and wondered whether such traditions might exist in the north. Through Zhemukhov, then editor of the government-supported daily newspaper *Kabardino-Balkarskaia pravda*, King made contact with Balkarov, the leader of Khatti. Balkarov was immediately taken with the idea of incorporating the bagpipe into one of Khatti's shows, since the previous year the troupe had performed at the prestigious Edinburgh Festival. (One of the male dancers regularly wore a t-shirt around Nalchik featuring the blue-and-white Scottish saltire.) On two occasions, Khatti and King performed impromptu concerts in the public square outside the Vostok Cinema in downtown Nalchik, with King playing Scottish dance music and marches, while the dancers performed choreographed Circassian steps that happened to match the time signature of the pipe music. One of the performances also incorporated Circassian percussionists on the pkh"ets'ych. The concerts attracted scores of incredulous passers-by—including local police, who seemed more befuddled than disturbed by the public spectacle—and received coverage in the local

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and federation-wide press.[45] Interest in the musical performance was substantial, not least because of the persistent popularity of Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* (1995) among north Caucasus cultural activists, who saw in the Scottish hero something of a model for highlander revivalism.

In searching for local tunes that might fit the Scottish bagpipe, King came across a 1993 textbook in Zhemukhov's personal library that featured a fuzzy picture of an alleged Circassian bagpipe labeled a *fend pshyna,* literally a "bag instrument."[46] Yet, like a grainy photograph of the Loch Ness monster, few informants had ever seen such a thing in person, or even heard the term for it. Enter Mukhamed Khafitse, editor of the main Circassian-language daily newspaper, *Adyge psal"e.* Khafitse was one of the stalwarts of the Circassian national movement in the 1990s. In 2005 he had been one of the chief supporters of the adyge jegu movement, at times even carrying chairs for musicians from his editorial offices across from Abkhaz Square. His newspaper had created Circassian names for the months of the year, promoting their use in place of Russian ones. Shortly after the first Khatti concert with the bagpipe, *Adyge psal"e* published an article reporting on the odd mash-up of Scottish and Circassian cultures.[47] In preparing the article, however, the newspaper immediately faced a linguistic problem: what was such an instrument to be called in Circassian? The newspaper's choice was *vyfe nak"yre,* literally a "buffalo-skin flute," a wholly invented term that sounded far more romantic than the pedestrian reality. (The bag on King's instrument is made of Gore-Tex.)

Khafitse followed up the article with an interview with King and Zhemukhov. During the interview, King and Zhemukhov pointed out the difference between the terms *vyfe nak"yre,* used previously by the newspaper, and *fend pshyne,* which the authors knew to be the term already used in at least one written source. By the time the interview was published, a third term—in fact, an old and well-established one—had found its way into the newspaper: the Russian *volynka.* The choice was somewhat surprising, given the newspaper's preference for indigenized usage. Apparently, Khafitse and his associates came to prefer the existing Russian term to a neologism that they perceived as inauthentic after learning of the alternative Circassian term—supposedly even more authentic but less well known—suggested by King and Zhemukhov.

Like the term *adyge jegu, vyfe nak"yre* was of very recent vintage. But the confusion over terminology gave way to a very practical question: regardless of what it is called, how do you build a bagpipe? A musician with Khatti, Anzor Utizhev, was so enamored with the two concerts featuring the Scottish bagpipe that he took on the task of (re)creating the Circassian version of the

45. Larisa Shadueva, "Adygskie tantsy pod shotlandskuiu volynku," *Kabardino-Balkarskaia pravda,* 15 August 2006, reprinted in *Komsomol'skaia pravda,* 31 August 2006; Zinaida Mal'bakhova, "Professor s mal'chisheskim litsom," *Kabardino-Balkarskaia pravda,* 16 September 2006; "Charl'z King: V novostiakh nichego khoroshego pro Kavkaz ne skazhut," *Severnyi Kavkaz,* August 2006.

46. *Rodnye melodii: Dopolnenie k programme po muzyke dlia 1–4 klassov obshcheobrazovatel'nykh shkol na materiale muzykal'noi kultury KBR* (Nalchik, 1993).

47. Taise Nybezh', "Vyfe nak"yremre adyge mak"amemre," *Adyge psal"e,* 17 August 2006.

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instrument—or at least a version that was loosely based on the item pictured in the 1993 textbook, which itself seems to have been reprinted from a 1970s-era Soviet atlas of musical instruments.[48] Other Khatti musicians, some of them trained ethnomusicologists, had reconstructed Circassian fiddles, and in several conversations with King, Utizhev examined the Scottish bagpipe, asked about its physical properties and tuning, and noted the single and double reeds that produce the sound. He showed up to one meeting with a Scottish bagpipe that someone had brought back from a trip abroad. Utizhev explained his frustration at trying to get this instrument to work, but King reassured him that it was not his fault: the souvenir, probably made in Pakistan, was an unplayable instrument meant to be hung on a wall. Relieved, Utizhev expressed interest in designing his own instrument, and King provided him with a set of reeds.

Within a year, Utizhev was appearing with Khatti with his own version of the bagpipe: an instrument that was essentially a double-reed chanter, similar to a Middle Eastern *zurna,* tied into a bag that he had fashioned from a hairy goatskin. The tuning bore little resemblance to cognate bagpipes in Georgia or Turkey—now reasonably common in dance ensembles—nor to the very different Scottish version. There were too many finger holes to replicate the simple scale of other folk instruments in Circassia, such as indigenous fiddles or flutes. But in the only way that really mattered, Utizhev's Circassian bagpipe fit the bill: it looked something like the only extant photograph of the fend pshyne. As neither King nor Zhemukhov could have predicted at the beginning of this bizarrely revealing experience, their unintended intervention had resulted in the creation of a wholly invented instrument that had become, in the alchemy of national reconstruction, somehow authentic enough to serve its purpose: getting Circassians up to dance.

National Cultures, Global Contexts

The adyge jegu encapsulated several core debates in contemporary Circassian national discourse. First, it became a gesture of rejection toward certain Soviet forms of performance art, those that combined proletarian ideology, mixed ethnic content, and ballet-inspired technique. The adyge jegu is an artistic, communal, and political movement that substitutes ideologies of nobility for the proletarian, ethnic purity for pan-Caucasus brotherhood, and folkloric themes for professionalized dance styles. Second, the movement is a product of the post-Soviet Circassian national revival that, at the same time, owes a great deal to the writings of Soviet-era folklorists, ethnographers, and linguists. The switch to Circassian-language education in elementary schools in Kabardino-Balkaria in the early 1990s and the introduction of classes in Circassian history for middle schools and high schools created a new generation of young people interested in Circassian culture. Dance became an easily accessible representation of national identity—far easier, in fact, than learning Circassian for students who had been reared in a Russian-dominant en-

48. K. Betkov, G. Blagodatov, and E. Iazovitskaia, *Atlas muzykal'nykh instrumentov narodov SSSR* (Moscow, 1975).

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vironment (or, likewise, for ethnic Circassians living in the diaspora). Third, the organizers of the adyge jegu regarded it as an instrument for national renewal and pan-Circassian unity. It was to become one of the main vehicles—inherently communal, rule-governed, and fun—for uniting Circassians in the northwest Caucasus and their diasporic cousins, as well as a link between Circassians and Abkhaz south of the mountains.

More broadly, the adyge jegu is a superb example of the creation of a communal dance idiom that, in relatively short order, has become identified as a quintessential defining element of collective identity. But despite the originators' desire to train their participants to be good Circassians, keeping their (female) arms low and their (male) fists tight, the cultural form has now taken on a life of its own. A search on YouTube for various spellings of adyge jegu reveals its use as a term to describe virtually any form of communal dance done by people who self-identify as Circassians, from a wedding in Amman to a raucous student party in New Jersey.

The global travels of the adyge jegu, from Abkhaz Square into the Circassian diaspora, also highlight the most profound of the many ironies that attended the rise of this cultural form. Bgazhnokov wrote his book to revive a lost tradition of communal dance and help dancers avoid the highly stylized and consciously invented dance forms promoted by Soviet official institutions. His aim was to catalogue the messy reality of human movement while at the same time distilling and preserving the "rules" according to which national culture could be most legitimately expressed. For young men and women searching for ways of connecting to an indigenous culture that was real, rooted, and replicable, Bgazhnokov's work proved to be the ur-source. Yet in spite of this concern with "getting it right," the adyge jegu is now a multifaceted, incorrigible, and multifarious thing—a form of dance that Circassians clearly get "wrong" a great deal of the time.

But that, of course, is the point. There are many ways of being Circassian and doing Circassian culture, from the artful performances of groups such as Kabardinka and Khatti to the popular and participatory adyge jegu itself. The truest form of "Circassian dance" has never been more than simply the dances that Circassians do. Even the rule-bound adyge jegu, with its master and mistress of ceremonies and its deep obsessions with correct behavior, has been transformed into a new, uncontrollable, and global way of being national.

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