

Some Notes on the Settlement of Northern Caucasians in Eastern Anatolia and Their Adaptation Problems (the Second Half of the XIXth Century - the Beginning of the XXth Century)

Georgi Chochiev*

Bekir Koç**

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I-Socio-Political Situation of Eastern Anatolia during the Process of the Settlement of Northern Caucasian Refugees

Although the migration of Northern Caucasian refugees (or Circassians in their common name¹) to Eastern Anatolia² was reflective of the settlement policy of the Ottoman Empire, it also had certain particularities stemming from the demographic and socio-economic structure of the eastern provinces. Hence, one of the most significant characteristics of Eastern Anatolia was the high ethno-religious heterogeneity of the population that was around 2,5 million in the second half of the XIXth century. The population of the region in question comprised of Turks, who had significant lead in the northern and western parts of the region; Kurds, who were mostly divided into tribal and local factions; Armenians, who had no pre-eminence with a few exceptions; and Assyrians and Arabs concentrated in the south.³

Another characteristic that had marked every aspect of condition of Eastern Anatolia was the lack of control by the central administration. The areas under control were mainly restricted to cities, villages close to these cities, and some contiguous with Russia and Iran areas where regular troops were kept. As for the greater part of Eastern

* North Ossetian State University (Russia), Faculty of International Relations, Department of Turcology.

** Ankara University, Faculty of Letters, Department of History.

¹ The term "Circassian" has been used in this text to define all ethnic groups of Northern Caucasia (i.e. Adyges, Ossets, Chechens, Ingushes, Daghestanians, etc.) in line with the traditional usage in the Middle Eastern countries.

² The area in question in mid-XIXth century embraced Erzurum, Harput, Diyarbakir vilayets and the northern parts of the Aleppo vilayet. From the Erzurum vilayet towards the end of 1870s was separated the Van vilayet, and from the latter by the end of 1880s the Bitlis vilayet (during the period under review the Ottoman *vilayets* (provinces) were divided into *sancaks/sanjaks* (districts), and the latter - into *kazas* (townships)). Following the declaration of the Republic in 1923, this area became two large geographical regions of the country -Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia- consisting at present of over 20 *ils* (districts). Some of the city-names mentioned in the article were changed during the republican era, viz. Harput took the name of Elazığ, Diyarbakir - Diyarbakır, Hisn-ı Mansur - Adıyaman, Dersim - Tunceli.

³ For further information see: *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians (BDOA)*, ed. B. N. Şimşir, Ankara 1983-1990, vol. I, pp. 54-61; *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 126-135; *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print (BDFAP)*, gen. eds. K. Bourne and D. C. Watt, part I, series "B", University Publications of America, n.p. 1984-1985, vol. XIX, pp. 80-116; V. Cuiet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, Paris 1892-1894, vol. I, pp. XVI-XVII.

Anatolian Plateau, among the groups taking advantage of the limited state-control there, first and foremost were the nomadic, or semi-nomadic tribes that often tightly competed with each other over influence on the region. Lacking sufficient material and human resources, the state usually allowed disorder and competition, and in many cases sought ways to establish agreements with the most influential tribes of the region.⁴

Beginning with the last quarter of the XIXth century, activities of Armenian illegal armed groups were also added to the causes of disorder in Eastern Anatolia. Setting themselves as an object establishment of an autonomous or independent state within the borders of “historical Armenia”, and gaining the support of a considerable part of Armenian people as well as the European states, these groups thus engaged in a process of serious conflict with the Sublime Porte.⁵

As for economic conditions, despite the existence of a wide area of uncultivated arable land in Eastern Anatolia in the mid-XIXth century, negativities of the socio-political situation led to the deterioration of normal agricultural life. Specifically, it paved the way for the Christian population to move abroad or to the safer regions of the empire. In fact, toward the end of 1870s, nearly all the Greeks of the Erzurum vilayet had migrated to Russia, joined by the considerable portions of Armenians and Assyrians.⁶

Thus, due to such factors as the existence in the region of poorly controlled nomadic groups with tribal social organization; scantiness of settled rural elements; high concentration of the non-Muslim minorities showing impetuous rise of externally triggered nationalist sentiments and activities; the need to increase the number of trustworthy and efficient subjects to be recruited in case of conflict with Russia etc., the Sublime Porte was increasingly interested in attracting to Eastern Anatolia of some quantity of Northern Caucasians, who began to flow in growing amounts into the Ottoman territory as a result of the final Russian advance in their native region after the Crimean War of 1853-1856.

II-The Settlement Process of Caucasian Refugees in Eastern Anatolia

a-Migrations up to the Year 1864

The first attempts to direct Northern Caucasians towards Eastern Anatolia emerged at the end of the 1850s and the beginning of the 1860s. These dates correspond to the beginning of the first wave of Circassian migration to the Ottoman Empire. From 1858 on, tens of thousands of Circassians that came through the sea-route from Northwestern Caucasia to İstanbul and to the Ottoman Black Sea ports, were sent in order to settle to the Balkans, Western and Central Anatolia. The Ottoman State was abstaining

⁴ For further information see: *BDFa*, vol. XIX, pp. 82, 106-110; *BDOA*, vol. II, p. 31; “*Turkey*”, London 1880, no. 4, pp. 17-20, 24; *ibid.*, 1896, no. 6, pp. 322-323, 368-370; S. Duguid, *The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia*, “*Middle Eastern Studies*”, London 1973, vol. IX, pp. 144-145; G. Sasuni, *Kürt Ulusal Hareketleri ve 15. Yüzyıldan Günümüze Ermeni-Kürt İlişkileri*, İstanbul 1992, pp. 94-95.

⁵ S. Duguid, *ibid.*, pp. 145-150; M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question (1774-1923)*, New York 1966, pp. 253-259.

⁶ C. Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey (1800-1914)*, Chicago 1980, pp. 13, 16; *BDFa*, vol. XIX, pp. 85, 102; “*Turkey*”, 1896, no. 6, p. 195.

from disregarding the desires of the refugees to settle in socio-politically and naturally more prosperous regions.⁷ Thus, the government directed them to the West with the hope that they would ameliorate the social and political situation there. At the same time, this constituted a positive response to Russian warnings against settlement of Northern Caucasian refugees near the Russian border.⁸ However, the principal reason why Northern Caucasians were not settled in Eastern Anatolia was that the local population of the region was extremely poor, lacking the material means to accomplish a wide-scoped settlement policy.⁹ For this reason only a small portion of Caucasians who migrated during this period to the Ottoman territory could be settled in Eastern Anatolia. This group almost solely comprised of those who reached Erzurum via the land route through Transcaucasia coming from the eastern and central regions of Northern Caucasia – Daghestan, Chechnia, Ossetia, and Kabarda. The first and the most numerous body that succeeded in this endeavor was the set of about 3,000 Northern Caucasian families (or 15-20,000 people) who crossed the northeastern Ottoman frontier in April-May 1860 and eventually were settled chiefly in the Erzurum vilayet. The majority of these families settled in the vicinity of Sarıkamış at the eastern skirts of Soğanlı-Dağ in the central kaza of the sancak of Kars and established nearly 20 villages there, partly on the lands abandoned in previous years by Greeks and Armenians.¹⁰ It seems like the Sarıkamış region soon had gained popularity among the migrants from Northeastern and Central Caucasus due to the fact that it hosted a good number of people from their homeland, and similarity of its mountainous wooded landscape to that of Caucasia. For example, the fact that in 1861-1863 some Chechen and Osset groups left the places in Central Anatolia, where they had initially settled, to move to Sarıkamış with the permission of the Ottoman administration, proves the above mentioned tendency.¹¹ According to the available information, the total number of Northern Caucasians who settled at the beginning of 1860s in Sarıkamış was approximately 6-8,000.¹² Northern Caucasian immigrants, though in far smaller numbers, were also settled in other kazas of the Kars sancak,¹³ as well as in the neighbor Çıldır (Ardahan) sancak,¹⁴ and the kazas of Tercan, Tekman and Hınıs of the Erzurum sancak.¹⁵ On the other hand, it is well known that some refugees did

⁷ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*, İstanbul (BOA), Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayat, no. 417/66.

⁸ BOA, Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayat, no. 542/19.

⁹ For example, in the spring of 1860 the Assembly of the Kars sancak announced that owing to the privations suffered during the Crimean War the local population was not in a position to help Caucasian refugees. See: BOA, Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayat, no. 400/66.

¹⁰ *Arhiv vneshney politiki Rossii* (Russian Foreign Politics Archives), Moscow, Glavniy arhiv, 1-9, 1857 g., op. 8, d. 30, l. 32-36; BOA, Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayat, no. 542/19.

¹¹ B. Habiçoğlu, *Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Göçler*, İstanbul 1993, p. 91; S. Kazmaz, *Sarıkamış'ta Köy Gezileri*, Ankara 1995, pp. 28-29, 267.

¹² According to the claims of a British officer who was in Sarıkamış to gather intelligence in 1876, 1,005 Northern Caucasian families resided there, who could provide 2,000 volunteer cavalymen for the Ottomans in case of conflict. See: F. Burnaby, *On Horseback through Asia Minor*, London 1878, p. 324. On the other hand, a Russian author writes concerning the same period that the adult male Northern Caucasian population in the region was about 2,000. See: P. F. Stepanov, *Zametka o Karsskoy oblasti* (A note on the Kars region), *Izvestiya kavkazskogo otdela imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva* ("Proceedings of the Caucasian Division of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society") (*IKOIRGO*), Tiflis 1881, vol. VII, no. 1, pp. 181-182.

¹³ BOA, Cevdet, Dahiliye, no. 6831.

¹⁴ BDOA, vol. I, p. 57.

¹⁵ BOA, Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayat, no. 484/71, 525/98, 542/19.

not find the living conditions satisfactory, and returned to Caucasia in the same period taking advantage of loose border control.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Immigrants' Commission announced repeatedly in 1861-1862 that some of the Northwestern Caucasian refugees who following their debarkation in the Black Sea ports were for years kept in great numbers in the places of temporary accommodation in towns like Trabzon, Samsun and Sivas, were to be moved to the Diyarbekir vilayet and the Urfa sancak of Aleppo. The Sublime Porte in this way evidently attempted to speed up the immigration process towards Southeastern Anatolia. However, due to financial difficulties involved in transportation, only a few Adyge refugees were settled in the region. In a short while these immigrants moved to other parts of the empire, possibly due to problems they had with nomadic tribes.¹⁷ Besides that, between 1861 and 1862 scattered groups of Adyges settled also in rural areas at the western periphery of Eastern Anatolia - in the Hısn-ı Mansur and Malatya sancaks of the Harput vilayet.¹⁸

b-Migrations during and after the “Great Exile” of 1864

It is interesting that Northern Caucasians did not settle in any significant numbers in Eastern Anatolia, during their migration *en-masse* to the Ottoman Empire following the definitive Russian occupancy of the Caucasus in 1864. The Sublime Porte preferred to distribute hundreds of thousands of Circassians, coming by sea, among the Balkan, Western and Central Anatolian regions, as it had done before (and for the same reasons). This policy was contrary to the suggestion of concentrating immigrants in Northeastern Anatolia -namely in the mountainous region between Erzurum and the Black Sea,- put forward by British and French ambassadors in May 1864.¹⁹ Only a small group of Adyges were sent to northwestern shores of Lake Van -the Adilcevaz kaza of the Van sancak and Ahlat of Muş,- and established a few villages there.²⁰

On the contrary, in 1865 the Sublime Porte attempted at first to settle most of 5-6,000 Chechen families (about 40,000 people according to some sources)²¹ who arrived at the Ottoman territory through land, in Kars and Çıldır at the Russian border. Following the Russian government's protests, however, they had to move at least half of this group southward and to settle them between 1866-1867 in Re's-ül-Ayn of the Arab section of

¹⁶ I. Kanukov, Gortsi-pereselentsi (Migrant mountaineers), “*Sbornik svedeniy o kavkazskih gortsah*” (“Collection of information on the Caucasian mountaineers”), Tiflis 1876, vol. IX, pp. 84-103.

¹⁷ BOA, Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayat, no. 522/18, 540/63, 552/57, 556/34.

¹⁸ BOA, Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayat, no. 550/51.

¹⁹ C. Tutum, 1864 Göçü ile İlgili Bazı Belgeler, *Çerkeslerin Sürgünü (21 Mayıs 1864)*, Ankara 1993, pp. 28-32; “*Journal de Constantinople*”, 06.07.1864.

²⁰ BOA, İrade, Meclis-i Vala, no. 25785; Z. Atılgan, Muş, Bitlis ve Bingöl İllerindeki Kuzey Kafkasyalı Muhacirler, “*Birleşik Kafkasya*”, İstanbul 1965, no. 5, p. 51.

²¹ BDOA, vol. I, p. 304; B. Habiçoğlu, *ibid.*, p. 86; A. Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri (1856-1876)*, Ankara 1997, pp. 101, 147; P. A. Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, Wiesbaden 1989, p. 172. Although all immigrants of 1865 were named “Chechen” by Ottoman sources, undoubtedly, a small number of other peoples of Northeastern and Central Caucasia, viz. Ingushes, Kabardins (a sub-group of Adyges) and Ossets, also existed among them. See: G. A. Dzagurov, *Pereseleniye gortsev v Turtsiyu* (Migration of mountaineers to Turkey), Rostov-na-Donu 1925, *passim*.

Aleppo and in different parts of the neighboring Diyarbekir vilayet. The remaining refugees were sent to Central Anatolia, to the Sivas area.²²

After the settlement of Chechens was over, no serious attempts of colonizing Northern Caucasians in Eastern Anatolia were witnessed during more than 10 years. This was related on the one hand to the actual halt at this period of immigration movements into Ottoman lands from Northeastern and Central Caucasus via Transcaucasia, and on the other, to the fact that Russia succeeded in 1867 to press upon the Porte the condition about non-settlement of Circassian refugees eastwards of the line Erzincan-Tokat-Amasya-Samsun. In fact, the latter development automatically prevented the use of the whole Northeastern Anatolia for colonization purposes.²³

c-1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War and the Following Migrations

During the first phase of the war the Russians captured a great part of the Erzurum vilayet, including Kars and Çıldır and, therefore, all the villages established by Northern Caucasian refugees in Sarıkamış and neighboring kazas at the beginning of 1860s. As the region in question was ceded to Russia with the Berlin Treaty of 1878, increased violence there led to Muslims' migrations to the inner areas of the empire. The Russian authorities, aiming to promote Slavic and Orthodox elements in the region gained, were unable and for the most part unwilling to prevent the aforementioned mass migrations. Moreover, they encouraged emigrations of Muslims, offering them the real market values of their immovables.²⁴ According to official Russian sources, over 80,000 Muslims left the area.²⁵ Although the ratio of Caucasian refugees to the migrating population was uncertain, it can be said with a fair amount of confidence that the great majority of them joined this stream. Hence, at the beginning of 1890s the Russian administration registered in the Kars region only four villages of Northern Caucasians including 424 Ossets, 199 Daghestanians, and 5 Adyges - a total of 628 people.²⁶ The decision of the Circassians of Kars was primarily based on the assumption that the Tsar government would not allow them to practice their religion and customs freely and to preserve relatively independent mode of life, as well as on traditional hostility towards Russians.²⁷

Apart from the refugees of Northeastern Anatolia, in the same years nearly 200,000 Circassians -among other Muslims- were mobilized and forced out of the Balkan

²² *BOA*, İrade, Meclis-i Mahsus, no. 1264; *ibid.*, İrade, Dahiliye, no. 37731, 38018.

²³ The fact that this agreement was directly linked by the Russian side with the problem of permission to approximately 4,000 Abkhazian families to emigrate to Ottoman lands, may be considered as an evidence of that the officials in St.-Petersburg were aware of and concerned by the Sublime Porte's plans to more actively settle near the Russian border Western Caucasian refugees coming by sea-route, too. See: *BOA*, İrade, Meclis-i Mahsus, no. 1408.

²⁴ "Turkey", 1879, no. 10, pp. 103-104.

²⁵ D. Bakradze, "Istoriko-etnograficheskiy ocherk Karsskoy oblasti" (Historical-ethnographical essay on the Kars region), *IKOIRGO*, Tiflis 1881, vol. VII, no. 1, p. 197.

²⁶ P. Helmitskiy, *Karsskaya oblast. Voyenno-statisticheskiy i geograficheskiy obzor* (Kars region. Military-statistical and geographical review), Tiflis 1893, part II, section 2, pp. 36-37; *ibid.*, part II, section 3, pp. 61-90.

²⁷ S. Kazmaz, *ibid.*, p. 33; P. F. Stepanov, *ibid.*, p. 181.

provinces the Sublime Porte lost.²⁸ This movement was the result of charges against them put forward by European states, especially Russia, with concerns over their maltreatment of the local Christian population. The majority of Northern Caucasians wished to settle in Western and Central Anatolia since their fellow Caucasians had settled there before. The Sublime Porte, however, was hoping to direct a significant part of these new settlers towards places where large groups had not settled before. In this framework, they began re-assessing Eastern Anatolia for wide-scoped migration activity. As a result of this search for vacant land, they came across areas with a capacity to host 9,000 families in Diyarbekir and Van vilayets, in 1878.²⁹

Since the leaders of the Armenian community also closely followed this significant demographic process that was critical for the political future of Eastern Anatolia, the concern with Northern Caucasian settlements in the region led to serious debates and speculations involving frequently foreign circles. As early as the end of 1876, during the international Istanbul Conference held to resolve the “Eastern question”, the Patriarch of the Armenian Gregorian Church protested before the plenipotentiaries of participant powers plans of settling Circassians of the Balkans in Eastern Anatolia, declaring that this migration would “...expose them (Armenians. - G.C., B.K.) to the maltreatment of Circassians smarting under their expulsion from their European homes”.³⁰ During the Berlin Congress of 1878 similar warnings were made to the leaders of European countries, as well. The agreements that followed the 1877-1878 war did not officially ban the settlement of Circassians of the Balkans in Eastern Anatolia. At the same time, the majority of the powers were deeply suspicious of the efforts of the Sublime Porte that led to migrations, and underlined urgently what an unfavorable experience it had been till then to settle Northern Caucasians among the Christian population. Amidst these discussions the Ottoman administration made an unsuccessful attempt to direct 2,500 families of Circassian refugees from the Balkans to Diyarbekir. Upon this development, in January 1879, the Armenian bishop of Diyarbekir and the leaders of other local Christian communities sent protest telegrams, in order to stop this movement, to the major European embassies in Istanbul. These efforts produced results in a short time,³¹ and the Sublime Porte actually renounced afterwards the idea of settling refugees from the Balkans in that region. This was partly to avoid deterioration of relations with European states, as well as not to escalate tension in the eastern provinces. Only a small group of Adyges from the Balkans was settled within the sancak of Urfa of the Aleppo vilayet.³²

Thus, only the refugees who had left Kars and Çıldır remained in the hands of the Sublime Porte among the migrants of Northern Caucasian origin who were planned to be settled in the East. Taking into account the fact that relations of comparative tolerance existed before the war between this group and the local Christian population, the powers also had generally positive attitude towards Ottoman intentions. In fact, only the leaders

²⁸ M. Pinson, *Ottoman Colonization of the Circassians in Rumili after the Crimean War*, “*Etudes Balkaniques*”, Sofia 1972, no 3, p. 75.

²⁹ N. İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk Göçleri (1877-1890)*, Ankara 1994, pp. 164, 206.

³⁰ “*Turkey*”, 1877, no. 2, p. 34.

³¹ N. İpek, *ibid.*, p. 206; *BDOA*, vol. I, pp. 304-307.

³² H. C. Barkley, *A Ride through Asia Minor and Armenia*, London 1891, pp. 243, 246.

of the Armenian community seriously opposed this plan, interpreting it as a conscious effort to affect the demographic structure in places inhabited by Armenians, and at times exploiting the “Balkan syndrome” in their purposes. For example, Armenians reacted strongly against the attempt of directing 4,000 Muslim families from Northeastern Anatolia to Van. In June 1879 the Armenian Patriarch sent a letter to the British ambassador H. Layard, requesting the prevention of the settlement in question, claiming the group comprised of “Roumelian emigrants” defined as “...nothing short of enemies of order and progress”. British diplomats, however, carried out research showing that all of these refugees really came from Kars. Thus, refusing the Patriarch, H. Layard specially expressed his incomprehension of “on what ground did he object to the settlement... of quiet and industrious people, although Mussulmans, who would be a check upon the Kurds.” In his report to the Foreign Office, on the other hand, H. Layard described the foundation of Armenian concerns about the Circassians as keeping the “Armenian issue” on the international agenda.³³

Yet, the number of refugees of Kars that from mid-1879 began to move southwards, to the Van vilayet, was finally reduced to 1,200 families.³⁴ Although the sources do not give definite information on the ethnic structure of this group, Northern Caucasians undoubtedly constituted the majority of these families. In the subsequent period they established nearly 20 villages in a vast area to the north, west and east of Lake Van - in the Varto, Bulanık, and Malazgirt kazas of the Muş sancak, Ahlat of Bitlis, Adilcevaz and Van of Van.³⁵ It is noteworthy that these villages were scattered over region with the most significant proportion of Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire.³⁶ At the same time, certainly, the state intended to promote livelihood in the region, which had a very important unexploited agricultural potential.³⁷

Despite the primary intentions of the state, not all of the Northern Caucasians who left Kars by the end of the 1870s and the beginning of the 1880s were settled in the inner parts of Eastern Anatolia. Approximately half of them migrated -with or without the approval of the state- to Central Anatolia and mainly to Sivas and Ankara vilayets, where their fellow Circassians had settled long before.³⁸

After the migrations that took place following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, Northern Caucasians’ movement to Eastern Anatolia came to a halt. Although from the late 1880s stimulation of Muslim immigrations assumed in fact the character of state policy,³⁹ the Sublime Porte failed to carry out any significant settlement of Northern Caucasians in the region. This situation is partly due to the general drop in migration on the part of Northern Caucasians in this period, as well as to the close interest of the great

³³ “Turkey”, 1879, no. 10, pp. 99-100, 119; *Rumeli’den Türk Göçleri. Belgeler*, prep. by B. N. Şimşir, Ankara 1989, vol. II, pp. 330-331, 356.

³⁴ “Turkey”, 1880, no. 4, p. 27.

³⁵ H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, London 1901, vol. II, p. 340.

³⁶ According to official documents, in all 72,600 Christians and 51,200 Muslims lived in the above-mentioned six kazas. See: *BDOA*, vol. I, pp. 55, 60.

³⁷ *BDOA*, vol. I, p. 55; C. Issawi, *ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁸ *BDOA*, vol. VI, p. 373.

³⁹ See: K. H. Karpaz, *Avrupalı Egemenliğinde Müslümanların Konumu: Çerkeslerin Sürgünü ve Suriye’deki İskanı, Çerkeslerin Sürgünü (21 Mayıs 1864)*, Ankara 1993, pp. 74-75.

powers in settlement activities concerning Circassians. Thus, in 1888 the government considered a new plan to open 247,000 *dönüms* (1 *dönüm* was about 1,200 sq. m.) of vacant land, found in Erzurum, Van and Diyarbekir vilayets, to refugees coming from Caucasus through northeastern borders of the empire.⁴⁰ However, Russia strongly opposed the plan; moreover, she arbitrarily expanded the scope of opposition to Circassian settlements not only at the border region, as it had been before, but actually in all of Eastern Anatolia including the extreme south.⁴¹ When the British also declared the impossibility of such a plan due to the necessity to prevent probable hostilities among Circassian refugees and the Armenians,⁴² the Sublime Porte quit insisting on it, in order to avoid the issue from becoming an international affair.

Nevertheless in the following years Ottomans continued to bring up at times wide-scoped plans about settling Circassians in the eastern provinces. For example, the headquarters of the IVth Army stationed in Eastern Anatolia applied to the government in 1892 to take precautionary measures in the Dersim sancak of Harput, which was in a state of permanent anarchy owing to the armed activities of Kurdish tribes and Armenian nationalist groups. It was proposed to settle 10,000 Caucasian and other refugees, who could contribute to maintaining peace, along with auxiliary armed forces in the region. Despite full support of the Sultan, this attempt was not finalized, either.⁴³ The Sublime Porte brought another proposal at the end of 1894 and the beginning of 1895, to settle Northern Caucasians in the Hakkari sancak at the Iranian border of Van. The purpose of the Ottomans was to replace Nestorian Assyrians who had moved out of the country beginning with the 1890's because of tribal pressure, with a new settled peasant community. Strong British opposition and warning about prevention of hostilities of Circassian communities against Assyrians left this plan without result.⁴⁴

d-Migrations at the Beginning of the XXth Century

Migratory movements from Northern Caucasia into Eastern Anatolia were revived at the beginning of the XXth century. During this period the main region where Northern Caucasians settled was the Muş sancak recently placed under Bitlis. In March 1901, provincial administration demanded settlement of 1,500-2,000 Muslim immigrant families in the Muş plain. This request was in order to “prevent provocative activities of revolting Armenians, as well as to develop the infant, yet promising agricultural production and trade.” Although the proposal was well received by the central government, due to transportation difficulties, it was limited to the refugees who arrived by land through the Russian border.⁴⁵ During the first ten years of the XXth century, especially between 1901 and 1905, nearly 1,500 immigrants came in small parties from Daghestan and Chechnia to Muş. It is noteworthy that only few of them really settled on the Muş plane within the central kaza of the sancak, as the administration had planned.

⁴⁰ N. İpek, *ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴¹ *BOA*, İrade, Meclis-i Mahsus, no. 4800; “*Turkey*”, 1889, no. 1, p. 21.

⁴² “*Turkey*”, 1889, no. 1, p. 21.

⁴³ N. İpek, *ibid.*, pp. 158-159, 207.

⁴⁴ “*Turkey*”, 1896, no. 6, pp. 195-196, 210.

⁴⁵ *Kafkasya ve Muhaceret Belgeleri*, prep. by M. N. Aktaş and M. Aksoy, “*Kuzey Kafkasya*”, İstanbul 1973-1976, no. 22-40, pp. 59-67.

The rest preferred to settle in the neighboring Varto and Bulanık kazas, mainly in the “old” Northern Caucasian villages previously established by their folks.⁴⁶

e-The Number of Northern Caucasians Who Settled in Eastern Anatolia

According to available data on the numbers of various immigrant groups, during the second half of the XIXth and the beginning of the XXth century nearly 40-45,000 Northern Caucasians were sent to Eastern Anatolia for settlement purposes. These figures were obviously far lesser than it had been originally supposed by the Porte. Moreover, it should be noted that a significant part of these refugees could not adapt to the socio-economic, political and natural conditions of the region, and sooner or later moved either to the western parts of the Empire or, rarely, back to Caucasia. This fact accounts greatly for the lack of important growth of the total of Circassian population in Eastern Anatolia throughout the period in question, as the below-mentioned figures confirm.

Since the Ottoman demographic statistics usually did not differentiate the Muslim population on the ethnic basis, we have to apply also to rather scanty and rough data contained in unofficial sources, to approximate the rate of change of the numbers and territorial distribution of Circassian groups in Eastern Anatolia. For example, according to the document presented by the Armenian Patriarch to the European ambassadors at Istanbul in 1880, which reflected the demographic situation in “Armenian regions” prior to the 1877-1878 war, a total of 35,000 Circassians lived in Eastern Anatolia, viz. 10,000 in the Erzurum vilayet (except Van, Bitlis and Muş), 10,000 in the Harput vilayet, and 15,000 in the Diyarbekir vilayet, while in Van, Bitlis and Muş sancaks and the Anatolian part of Aleppo Northern Caucasian refugees were not recorded.⁴⁷ In the extensive statistical and geographical description of late 1880s’ - early 1890s’ Asia Minor by V. Cuinet the information about Circassian population only in two eastern vilayets is to be found; namely in Diyarbekir 10,000 (3,334 of them in the sancak of Diyarbekir, 3,354 in Ergani, 3,312 in Mardin), and in Van -excluding Bitlis and Muş- 500 persons.⁴⁸ According to another Armenian source dated 1912, a total of only 17,000 Northern Caucasians were recorded in Eastern Anatolia (except its most southern, “non-Armenian” areas), viz. 7,000 in the Erzurum vilayet and 10,000 in the Bitlis vilayet (including Muş); although this source implied that no Circassians existed in Van, Diyarbekir and Harput vilayets,⁴⁹ it is certain that some Northern Caucasians still lived there at that time.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-67, 81-83, 91-95; S. Murad, The Jihad of Said Shamil and Sultan Murad for the Liberation of the Caucasus, “*Central Asian Survey*”, London 1991, vol. X, no. 1-2, p. 182.

⁴⁷ *BDOA*, vol. II, p. 83.

⁴⁸ V. Cuinet, *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 412, 636.

⁴⁹ *La Question Armenienne devant la Conference de la Paix*, Paris n.d., annexe no. 1.

⁵⁰ Northern Caucasian groups maintained their existence without showing great increase during most of the republican era as well. Thus, at the beginning of 1970s, according to research done by the Northern Caucasian Cultural Society of Ankara, nearly 17,800 Circassians lived in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian districts, namely in Kars, Muş, Mardin, Bitlis, Erzurum and Gaziantep; apart from this an unknown number of Northern Caucasians existed in at least three eastern districts - Bingöl, Malatya and Adıyaman. See: İ. Aydemir, Türkiye Çerkesleri, “*Kafkasya*”, Ankara 1975, no. 47, pp. 39-48. This situation came to an end only with the intensive urbanization and domestic migration processes of the last quarter of the XXth century, when almost all of the Circassian population of the East moved to the rapidly developing western and central parts of the country, especially to the big cities.

III-Adaptation Problems of Northern Caucasian Immigrants

a-Relations of Circassians with the Local Muslim Groups

The refugees who had the least problems concerning adjustment of relations with local communities and adaptation to the living-conditions of area, were the ones who resided in Kars and Çıldır (until their occupation) and generally in Northeastern Anatolia. This was mainly because refugees were settled there in vacant or deserted lands, and partly because the Sublime Porte was rather zealous in not allowing serious conflicts among the Muslims at the border region that was constantly under Russian threat. Besides that, settled agricultural elements who were relatively close to Circassians socio-culturally, had an appreciable numerical superiority as compared with the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribal communities. Moreover, some of these groups also had recently migrated to the region from other places (for example, Turcomans and partly Muslim Georgians who came from Transcaucasia). These factors helped Northern Caucasians blend with the local population. Although in the early stage of the settlement Northern Caucasians did experience some problems with their neighbors, soon after they were resolved, and relationships ameliorated. Intercommunitarian marriages, especially among the Circassians, Turcomans and the Georgians, provide evidence for this improvement.⁵¹

The situation was rather different in inner Eastern Anatolia, due to pressures exerted by Kurdish tribes on other groups. In fact, the Ottoman State was putting forward some efforts, though insufficient, to protect Northern Caucasian immigrants from aggression by the tribes.⁵² Yet, the fact that refugees were often settled in the areas forming actual “spheres of influence” of the tribes (sometimes directly in villages not long ago abandoned by Armenians who were under tribal control), as well as the fact that Circassians were as quick, and at times even quicker than the Kurds to utilize guns in case of conflict, escalated the tension.⁵³

An example for the kind of relations among Northern Caucasians and the local communities is the dispute toward the end of 1893, between Ossets of the Simo village of Muş and the Kurdish Sipkan tribe. The conflict began when Ossets agreed -in return for money- to guard and escort Armenians who decided to migrate from the neighboring Hamzaşeyh (Lapbudak) village, to the Russian border, despite the aforementioned tribe. The Kurds attacked the convoy, with the intention of looting. Northern Caucasians, however, fulfilled their promise to the Armenians, stopped the assault by killing a few of the attackers, and escorted the convoy until they safely reached the Russian border. Following this, the Kurds attacked Simo with greater force in vengeance, and over 20 people, mostly the tribesmen, died of conflict within a few days.⁵⁴ We can speculate on the motivation of Northern Caucasians as to spread their “living area” into the lands

⁵¹ W. G. Palgrave, *The Turkomans and Other Tribes of the North-East Turkish Frontier, Essays on Eastern Questions*, London 1872, pp. 150, 155.

⁵² *BOA*, İrade, Meclis-i Vala, no. 24747.

⁵³ V. Cuinet, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 491; H. F. B. Lynch, *ibid.*, p. 341; J. McCarthy, *Ölüm ve Sürgün*, İstanbul 1998, p. 56.

⁵⁴ “*Turkey*”, 1896, no. 6, pp. 11-12.

deserted by Armenians. The fact, that Ossets before long settled in Hamzaşeyh village, confirms this assumption.⁵⁵

The Ottoman State often encouraged Northern Caucasians to join local security forces, in order to limit the power of independent Kurdish landlords, and to increase efficiency of local administration. This attitude also led to increased tensions among the immigrants and the tribes. According to the British consul in Diyarbekir H. Trotter, the Kurds had such abhorrence for the Circassian *zaptiyes* (gendarmes) that they did not abstain from massacring them in remote areas out of reach of the state. Thus, in 1879 Ottoman officials in Nusaybin strictly refused to send the Circassian guards accompanying H. Trotter, to the nearby mountains assuming that they would certainly be killed by the Kurds.⁵⁶

In some cases, the Sublime Porte preferred to appoint Northern Caucasians as administrators to the regions inhabited by tribes that were poorly controlled by the state. For instance, in the Eleşkirt kaza within the Bayezit sancak of the Erzurum vilayet a regular bureaucrat, Circassian by birth, was appointed *kaymakam* (deputy-manager) instead of a member of the Kurdish family that traditionally held the post. The efforts of this Circassian to restore justice and order (including protecting Armenians from tribal pressure) led to animosity between the two ethnic parties. By the end of 1876, the events reached a climax when both the old and the new deputy-managers, along with several of their relatives got killed in an armed conflict. A possible massacre among Kurds and Caucasians (who probably came from neighboring Sarıkamış to help their fellows) was prevented by the Ottoman troops who made it just in time.⁵⁷

Not all of the Northern Caucasians, scattered around wide areas of the Eastern Anatolian Plateau, were in equal degree capable of defending themselves against attacks by the tribes. Circassians settled in relatively large groups to the north and west of Lake Van, especially in Muş and Bitlis sancaks, were able to maintain rather balanced relationships with other communities. On the other hand, those who settled in southern and eastern parts of the region faced great difficulties in protecting from the tribes the “living area” the state had provided them with. In time, as a result of failure to compete with the tribes, refugees especially had to leave Diyarbekir, Ergani, Urfa and Van sancaks.⁵⁸

Undoubtedly the most severe competition for the Northern Caucasians came from nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. However, various settled elements, though at different levels, were against the colonization of Caucasians in the region, too. Their opposition was chiefly owing to the demands of the state from the local population to help the new settlers materially and physically. Although as early as 1865, the Sublime Porte had

⁵⁵ H. F. B. Lynch, *ibid.*, p. 340; Z. Atılğan, *ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵⁶ “Turkey”, 1879, no. 10, p. 48. A Russian informer in the region also mentions that local administration was cooperating with the Circassians to suppress disobedient Kurdish and Arab elements. This, naturally, increased hostility among the Circassians and the tribes. See: A. M. Kolyubakin, *Materiali dlya voyenno-statisticheskogo obozreniya Aziatskoy Turtsii* (Materials for military-statistical description of Turkey in Asia), Tiflis 1888, vol. I, part 1, pp. 80-81.

⁵⁷ F. Burnaby, *ibid.*, pp. 266-268.

⁵⁸ *BOA*, İrade, Şura-yı Devlet, no. 896; *BDFa*, vol. XVI, p. 209.

declared in a letter sent to the officials of the Immigrants' Commission, that considering the economic conditions of the Eastern Anatolian population, voluntary charity should suffice,⁵⁹ this order was hardly ever respected in the rural area. During and following the war of 1877-1878, as the number of immigrants increased, the government had to oblige the local peasantry to participate in moving and settling the newcomers. For example, right before harvest time in 1879 the government instructed the administrators in the eastern provinces to rent the animals and carts from the locals by force in order to bring the migrants from Kars and Çıldır to their new places. Moreover, the very limited rent payments promised to the peasants were rarely made.⁶⁰ According to foreign consuls, the massive arrival of Circassian settlers and others was the main cause of scarcity and similar disasters in many places of Eastern and Central Anatolia during the late 1870s and the early 1880s.⁶¹

Another important factor that led to dissatisfaction among the peasants was the fact that Circassian settlers not infrequently assaulted villagers' possessions and even lives. In reality, these acts (pillaging the villages, animal theft, banditry, etc.) were carried out by a considerable number of the refugees as soon as they arrived, due to immediate physical and material adaptation problems. Thus, the phenomenon of "Circassian outrages" became clearly visible during the settlement of Chechens in Diyarbekir and Aleppo in 1865⁶² and the transfer of Circassians of Kars towards the south at the end of the 1870s.⁶³ Apart from these two periods, i.e. following the adaptation of the refugees and the beginning of their productivity, such excesses halted to a great extent. Similar conflicts became limited to actions of small crime groups of common origins, although the "tormenter" image of Circassian immigrants remained in the eyes of the local population, European consuls and travelers.⁶⁴ It seems that only in several ill-conditioned colonies that owing to hostile surrounding, systematic bad harvests, famine or similar reasons had to fight constantly for survival (for instance, in Re's-ül-Ayn and in the neighboring places along the Diyarbekir and Aleppo vilayets' border) a considerable portion of inhabitants continued to commit these crimes even long after settlement.⁶⁵

The administration in general did not interfere in such activities by immigrants⁶⁶ both because of lack of control over the region as well as abstinence from damaging the loyalty of new subjects for the Sultan and the Sublime Porte. Being unable to protect the refugees efficiently against nomadic tribes, the government preferred to overlook their

⁵⁹ *BOA*, İrade, Şura-yı Devlet, no. 311.

⁶⁰ "Turkey", 1879, no. 10, p. 199; *ibid.*, 1880, no. 4, pp. 16-17.

⁶¹ *BDFa*, vol. VI, pp. 372-373.

⁶² *BDOA*, vol. I, p. 304.

⁶³ "Turkey", 1880, no. 4, p. 17; *BDOA*, vol. I, pp. 98, 519.

⁶⁴ J. McCarthy, *ibid.*, p. 56; E. Nolde, *Reise nach Innerarabien, Kurdistan und Armenien*, Braunschweig 1895, p. 252; V. Cuinet, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 653. The following words of C. Wilson, the British consul in Anatolia in 1880, are noteworthy: "It has been too much the custom to abuse the refugees, and throw the blame of nearly every crime committed in the country upon them... The robberies for which the Circassians have acquired an evil reputation have been committed by a few desperate men whose names are well known, and by men of other nationalities who put on for the occasion the Circassian dress". See: *BDFa*, vol. VI, p. 373.

⁶⁵ "Turkey", 1879, no. 10, pp. 48, 58-59.

⁶⁶ Mahmut Celeleddin Paşa, *Mirat-ı Hakikat*, İstanbul 1983, p. 630.

excesses too, and as a rule did not take rigorous punitive measures following such events; on the contrary, the refugees evidently were allowed to settle their disputes with the locals on their own. Though in the fall of 1865 the troops were sent to the region in order to disarm the newly-arrived Chechen refugees and to defend from them the local inhabitants, this attempt produced no result, since the authorities did not dare the risk of direct conflict with the immigrants. The reason for this was that the Sublime Porte did not want to provoke the Chechens to desert the area in masses, nor did they want to leave them armless, i.e. completely vulnerable to tribal attacks.⁶⁷

b-Relations of Circassians with Non-Muslim Population

Although refugees occasionally had problems with all elements of local population, the only political reaction to their settlement came from the Armenians whose national identity was being rapidly formed in the previous years. This reaction sometimes was used by institutions like Istanbul Patriarchy and Armenian National Assembly as a tool to carry the Armenian question to the international arena.

The name of Northern Caucasians for the first time was mentioned in Armenian political documents among “elements of animosity against Armenians” in 1872, in the petition submitted by the Armenian National Assembly to the Sublime Porte. This document, drawing attention to the condition of Christian subjects in Eastern Anatolia, declared that “Kurds and other mountain peoples to whom lately have been added also the Circassians, cause great harm both to Armenians and other locals, as well as to the state treasury.” In order to protect the settled population “from these monsters” it was suggested either to disarm them or to arm the Christians and to send permanent troops to the region to maintain security.⁶⁸ As the Sublime Porte did not show interest in these demands, leaders of the Armenian community soon began to appeal principally to foreign diplomatic circles, hoping to find support from them. Thus, a letter sent by the Armenian Patriarch to the British Foreign Minister in 1876 included a long description of how Armenians suffered from the oppression of “Turks, Kurds, Avşars (i.e. Turcomans. - G.C., B.K.), as well as Circassians who had joined them.”⁶⁹

Armenians’ frequent exploitation since these years of the theme of “Circassian outrages” was closely related to increased interest on the part of European powers -due to the 1875-1878 “Eastern Crisis”- in condition of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire. According to reckonings made in this context, the claims of Armenians about being oppressed by Northern Caucasian refugees were supposed to remind the Europeans of the Ottoman practice of settling Circassians in the Balkans after 1864 as a deterrent element against local nationalist movements and, consequently, to gain international recognition and protection for Armenians, similar to those the Balkan Christians had acquired in this period.

On the other hand, as these claims constituted a favorable basis for future European intervention in Ottoman internal affairs, they were reflected in the international

⁶⁷ *BOA*, İrade, Dahiliye, no. 37746, 38018; J. McCarthy, *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶⁸ G. Sasuni, *ibid.*, pp. 96-99.

⁶⁹ E. Uras, *Tarihçe Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, İstanbul 1976, p. 191.

documents that shaped the results of the 1877-1878 war. In fact, the San-Stephano Ottoman-Russian Peace Treaty of March 3, 1878 brought requirements to the Sublime Porte for the “immediate reform of local conditions in regions inhabited by Armenians and guaranteeing their security against Kurds and Circassians” (art. 16).⁷⁰ This article was repeated in the multilateral Berlin Treaty of July 13, 1878, however this time Circassians were given the first place among the elements of threat by exchanging their place with the Kurds (art. 61).⁷¹

There were items about the Circassians in a number of reform projects submitted by the Armenians to foreign representatives and to the Sublime Porte between 1878 and 1880, with a view to promote execution of the 61st article. According to these proposals, Northern Caucasian refugees would be disarmed together with the nomad Kurds, and banned from employment by the administrative bodies and security forces of the targeted autonomous Armenian entity.⁷² The Ottoman government’s disregard of the aforementioned article and continuous complaints of Armenians led to a joint note sent by the great powers to the Porte on September 7, 1880. The note drew attention to the inadequacy of the reforms in “Armenian provinces” and demanded “exceptionally rigorous measures... for putting a stop to the excesses of the Circassians and Kurds”.⁷³

In the coming years the pressure of European powers upon the Istanbul government in this issue decreased considerably due to discord among them. It was mostly Britain who warned the Ottomans periodically in order to utilize the contents of the 61st article during the 1880s and the 1890s. Another striking feature of the diplomatic correspondence of this period was that the demands to the Sublime Porte to stop “Circassian outrages” actually ceased.⁷⁴ Without doubt, this fact was both due to the gradual decrease of Circassian phobia among European official circles and the public opinion, as well as it reflected the definitive transformation of Northern Caucasians settled in Eastern Anatolia into peasants working the land.

c-Social Situation of Northern Caucasian Immigrants

Agriculture and animal husbandry constituted the basis of Northern Caucasian refugees’ economic activity, as it used to be in Caucasia. Moreover, these activities due to the employment of more advanced agricultural methods and tools were as a rule more efficient than in the native villages.⁷⁵ It is also known that the refugees were superior to the local population in many crafts, especially metalworking.⁷⁶ Some authors have drawn attention to the fact that the number of refugees who dealt with small-scale trade (and sometimes even contraband) was increasing as well.⁷⁷ Northern Caucasians’ application

⁷⁰ *Sbornik dogovorov Rossii s drugimi gosudarstvami, 1856-1917* (Collection of treaties of Russia with other states, 1856-1917), ed. E. Adamov, Moscow 1952, pp. 168-169.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁷² E. Uras, *ibid.*, pp. 227-232; “Turkey”, 1880, no. 4, pp. 17-26; *ibid.*, 1880, no. 23, pp. 250-253.

⁷³ “Turkey”, 1880, no. 23, p. 279.

⁷⁴ See: *BDOA*, vols. II, III, IV, passim; *BDFa*, vol. XIX, pp. 117-135; M. Şaşmaz, *British Policy and the Application of Reforms for the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia (1877-1897)*, Ankara 2000, pp. 82-110.

⁷⁵ V. Cuinet, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 653; E. Nolde, *ibid.*, p. 252; P. A. Andrews, *ibid.*, pp. 107, 572.

⁷⁶ P. A. Andrews, *ibid.*, pp. 25, 107.

⁷⁷ A. M. Kolyubakin, *ibid.*, p. 165; M. Ş. Fırat, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi*, Ankara 1981, p. 82.

of relatively developed modes of production and their actual independence from tribal lords usually provided them with better living standards compared to neighboring Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, etc. villages.⁷⁸ Yet, it is clear that Circassians of Eastern Anatolia were economically much worse off if compared to their fellows in the central and western regions of the country.⁷⁹ Another point European and local observers unanimously emphasized was that Northern Caucasians due to their striving for cleanliness, neatness and generally “more civilized” lifestyle, were clearly distinguishable from neighboring groups.⁸⁰

Due to the above-mentioned factors, the vast majority of Circassian settlements in the eastern provinces constituted rather closed ethnic micro-enclaves with limited cultural and economic interaction with their environment. Undoubtedly, this led to the preservation of traditional patterns of socio-economic relations as well as culture and language.⁸¹ On the other hand, this ‘self sufficiency’ and the practical need to maintain their security stimulated active unification processes among Circassians on the local level. This tendency was especially enforced by the complexity of the refugees’ ‘political’ relations with the major local communities, geographically isolated location of many settlement areas, and adaptation problems. This situation led to the formation in some parts of the region of unofficial associations of villages inhabited by people of same, i.e. Northern Caucasian, origin, which were characterized by existence of a single institution of higher leadership as well as certain aid mechanisms. Such developments were felt among the Circassians of Kars and Çıldır during the years before the war of 1877-1878. Later the most significant association of that kind was formed in Muş, Bitlis and Van sancaks; at the end of the XIXth century this union, including over 20 Chechen, Osset, Daghestanian and Adyge villages, was headed by someone whose influence rather was based on his spiritual authority both in the eyes of his compatriots and the local administration, in which he had formerly served.⁸²

Serious difficulties of integrating into the traditional ethno-social order that dominated most of Eastern Anatolia, naturally, drove Circassians to keep most close relationships with and often to take jobs in the official civil and military institutions stationed in the provincial and district centers.⁸³ However, the generally protectionist policy led by the Ottoman central and local administrations toward refugees could only partially reduce their adaptation difficulties, for the lack of security in rural parts of the region, corruption and inadequacy among many officials, etc., decreased the effect of this policy. In fact, the fate of the majority of Northern Caucasian groups settled in Eastern Anatolia could be considered as a more or less successful case of fighting on their own for survival in extremely unfavorable political, socio-economic and sometimes natural conditions. Not surprisingly, some travelers at the end of the XIXth and the beginning of

⁷⁸ F. Burnaby, *ibid.*, pp. 324-325; H. F. B. Lynch, *ibid.*, pp. 331, 353; A. M. Kolyubakin, *ibid.*, p. 165.

⁷⁹ N. İpek, *ibid.*, p. 230.

⁸⁰ *B DFA*, vol. VI, p. 373; H. F. B. Lynch, *ibid.*, pp. 331-332; F. Burnaby, *ibid.*, pp. 324-325; M. Ş. Fırat, *ibid.*, p. 81.

⁸¹ A. M. Kolyubakin, *ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

⁸² H. F. B. Lynch, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁸³ M. Ş. Fırat, *ibid.*, pp. 81-82; V. Cuinet, *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 491, 653.

the XXth century recorded that regrets among Circassians for having left Caucasia and wishes to return were not infrequent.⁸⁴

In conclusion, the migrations mentioned above were triggered by the process of definitive subduing Northern Caucasian peoples by Russia that began soon after the Crimean War. During these migrations the region under scrutiny in this article began to host refugees who arrived especially by the land route. The first group of nearly 3,000 refugee families, or about 15-20,000 people, were settled in the Erzurum vilayet, mainly in the Sarıkamış area (approximately 6-8,000 people), in 1860. Although the Sublime Porte put forward settlement efforts concerning Eastern Anatolia during the migration that gained momentum in 1861-1862, the result was hardly successful due both to reluctance on the part of refugees about moving to the region as well as to the lack of material resources. On the other hand, during the mass-migration period (1864 and after) only slightly over the half of a total of 5-6,000 Chechen families, that immigrated in 1865, were settled in the Diyarbekir vilayet and northern section of Aleppo, since the other Circassian groups were mostly sent to the Balkans and Central and Western Anatolia. Following this settlement, the region did not receive another serious wave of migration for more than 10 years.

Following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 another intensive migration toward the region began, led by Northern Caucasians and other Muslim subjects who were forced to leave the Balkans; however since the Sarıkamış area and on the whole the northeastern part of Anatolia, which was more attractive to Circassians, was blocked by the Russian occupation, no appreciable settlement was carried out, either. Moreover, the earlier settlers in that area also had to leave for inner parts of the region, namely Muş, Bitlis and Van. After the Berlin Congress the enhanced interest of European diplomacy in the Christians of the eastern provinces urged the Sublime Porte to increase the number of Muslim population among the locals and maintain control over the region using refugees. Despite this motivation the government could not implement these plans to the desired extent, as reluctance on the part of immigrants to move to the region, Russia's objections to settlement near the border, Armenians' view of the issue as a threat to their cause and their appeals to the international circles, and finally Ottomans' lack of resources to instigate mass settlement, seriously hindered plans of settling refugees in the region. Despite all the negativities, about 40-45,000 Northern Caucasians, settled in Eastern Anatolia during the period in question, undoubtedly helped the Ottoman government cope -at least in some areas- with such strategic problems of the time, as cultivating deserted land, limiting the unruly activities of nomadic tribes and maintaining a higher number of Muslims than Christians.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ E. Nolde, *ibid.*, pp. 252-253; A. M. Kolyubakin, *ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

⁸⁵ K. H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population (1830-1914)*, Madison 1985, pp. 54, 57.