

Circassians Costumes & Accoutrements

АДЫГЭ ФАЦЭХЭР

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June, 2009

The North Caucasians have always been known for their vigour, good health, physical strength and longevity. Circassians paid great attention to enhancing the beauty and symmetry of their children's physiques. This cultic preoccupation with physical perfection meant that for male children of princely and noble descent, a rigorous, almost severe, martial training regimen was part and parcel of the formative years. The use of leather straps and other devices to contract the middle area produced the ideal shape in the folkloric ethos of a lean torso and wide chest. A slender waist for both males and females was at a premium.

Costumes were designed to enhance and highlight the beauty of the body according to prevalent ideals. The Circassians were the fashion trend-setters in the Caucasus. Their reputation for beauty and elegance was captured in the famous saying, 'Dressed like a Kabardian.' However, the Circassians donned their most dilapidated apparel when they did battle. According to John Longworth (1840, vol. 2, p51), 'in general the Circassians, when taking to the field, put on the worst and coarsest attire they can find; but many of their young heroes, out of emulation, a spirit of bravado or aspiring to the honours of martyrdom, render themselves conspicuous by wearing an entari [cherkesska] of the gayest colour.'

However bad the attire of a mountaineer was, his arms were always kept in perfect condition. One of Lermontov's Caucasian, Kazbich, was described thus, 'His *besmet* [quilted jacket] is always in tatters, but his armament is in silver.' Circassian costumes, etiquette, dance and other distinctive cultural traits were borrowed by the other peoples of the Caucasus to varying degrees. Even the

Cossacks adopted Circassian dress modes, dancing and the Circassians' flair for horsemanship.

Edmund Spencer (1937), a British traveller to Circassia in the year 1836, left a vivid description of the Circassian male costume:

... the natives of every clime are taught by experience the dress best calculated to protect them against its influence; and, certainly, the Circassian costume, besides being elegant, is, in every respect, well suited to the country: the lambswool turban preserved my head from the vertical sun; and by enveloping myself in the ample folds of the chlamyde, and covering my head with the capuchin on the approach of evening, I was protected from the nightly dews so pregnant with ills to the frame of man...

The usual dress of a Circassian warrior of all classes is a tunic resembling a military Polonoise, without a collar, closely fitted to the body, and descending to the knee, secured around the middle by a leather girdle, ornamented, according to the wealth or fancy of the wearer, with gold or silver, in which are stuck a pair of pistols and a poniard: the latter is a most formidable weapon in close combat; during an attack they hold it in the left hand, and from its breadth and length, reaching to the elbow, it serves every purpose of a shield.

In addition to this, the Circassian is armed with a light gun, slung across the shoulder, and a sabre suspended by a silk cord in the Turkish fashion; attached to the belt is a powder flask, and a small metal box containing flints, steel, gun-screws, oil, and, not infrequently, a small hatchet. Hence, a Circassian, whether on foot, or on horseback, is at all times completely armed. Sometimes he carries a javelin, which he uses with singular dexterity and effect, hurling it to a considerable distance with an aim that never errs. The latter weapon is also used as a rest for the rifle, having a groove at the top expressly for that purpose. Bows and arrows are now very rarely used, except in cases where it is necessary to arm the whole population.

On either side of the breast of the coat are the patron pockets, made of morocco leather, usually containing twenty-four rounds of ball cartridge: these not only add to the military appearance of the soldier, but in some measure protect the breast, and are extremely convenient: a round fur cap, with a crown the same colour as the ammunition pocket, is the covering for the head; and cloth trousers, in the eastern fashion, complete the costume. Princes and nobles are alone entitled to the privilege of wearing red; and the Circassian, like the natives of most other eastern countries, shave the head, and are never seen barefoot. When marching, or on a journey, they always add a cloak made from camel or goat's-hair, with a hood which completely envelopes the whole person – this is called a *tchaouka* [ʃʌkʌyɔ] – and no Mackintosh was ever more impenetrable to the rain; rolled up in its thick folds, it forms the only bed during their encampments, and serves, besides, to protect them against the scorching rays of the sun...

On entering the strangers' apartment, to which the, prince had the courtesy to conduct me himself, his squire, according to the general custom of this people, divested me of the whole of my weapons, and hung them up on the walls of the room with those of his master, except the poniard, which a Circassian never parts with, being considered a part of his costume. How like the warriors of ancient Greece!

And now with friendly force his band he grasped,
Then led him in within his palace halls;
His coat of mail, and glittering helm unclasped,
And hung the splendid armour on the walls;
For there, Ulysses' arms, neglected, dim,
Are left, nor more the conqueror's crown will win.

The Cossacks adopted their male costume, arms and dances from the North Caucasians, especially the Circassians. In his book *Russia: A Social History* (1931) D. S. Mirsky (Prince Dmitry Petrovich Svyatopolk-Mirsky) observes that 'not the least curious feature of the Russian conquest of the Caucasus was that it

led to the adoption of a number of Caucasian, mainly Qabardi [Kabardian], cultural traits—dress, arms and dances—by the Russian Cossacks and Georgians.’

Terek and Cossack regiments donned Circassian costumes. It was also used in the Russian army, especially in the black Sea and Line Armies, and later a variant was used in the Soviet cavalry. Cossacks also followed Circassian cap styles. The shapes of their *papakhas*, or tall hats, reflected the fashion of the mountaineers. There appeared types of caps such as the *kabardinka*, broadening to the top, and the *kubanka*, with a flat crown.

In addition, the Cossacks were influenced by the Circassian dignified customs and style of life, which in many respects were superior to their Russian counterparts. According to Paul Henze (1992, p72), ‘Cossacks... intermingled with both Circassians and Nogay Tatars, adopting to a large extent their customs and style of life, which was in many respects of a higher quality than the Russians had attained at the time.’

It is quite ironic that the costumes and dances of the Circassians had come to be more readily associated with the late adopters than with the originators — to the victor, all the spoils, including fortune and fame. Even the elegant Georgians were not immune from Circassian influences. The celebrated Georgian State Dance Company had adopted Circassian dress styles and choreography in its colourful repertoire.



Circassian costumes of the Adigean State Academic Folk Dance Ensemble 'Nalmes' in full blaze and glory. Established in 1936, 'Nalmes' sees itself as 'the collector, guardian, and interpreter of Adigean folk music and dancing'.

Circassian Female Costume

The elegance and beauty of Circassian women were boosted by exquisite costumes and magnificent ornaments. The outer coat, which could be either long or short, was made from a variety of fabrics and it was lined and generally wadded. A non-wadded version was called 'tsey' (цей). The *bghe'wlh* (бгъэIуль) (or *sch'i'w* [щIыIу]) consists of a false shirtfront of velvet or silk with (up to) 12 silver or gilt pairs of plate-like buckles, which when seen from a distance impart a beautiful lustre, and other ornaments. The dress has velvet sleeve pendants, embroidered in gold and silver threads. Flaps adorned with embroidery and fringes were used for effect. A loose light silk or cotton chemise with long and wide sleeves extended almost to the floor covering the footwear. This gives the impression that Circassian women glide along the floor when they dance in full costume.

The upper classes wore coats made from various kinds of furs and covered with brocade, silver or cotton fabric. It was trimmed with fur strips about 9cm wide. However, it was considered unseemly for girls and young women to be seen wearing them, even in freezing weather. Commoners and the poor had to make do with sheepskin coats.

'ЩIыIу' or 'бгъэIуль' ('*sch'i'w*', '*bghe'wlh*'; 'БгъэкIыIу' or 'кIыIу' in Adigean) is part of a Circassian woman's national costume. It consists of a false shirtfront of velvet or silk with (up to) 12 silver or gilt pairs of plate-like buckles, which when seen from a distance impart a beautiful lustre, and other ornaments.

Women and girls wore wide trousers made from striped fabrics, but the chemise wholly covered them. The underwear was made of silk with folded sleeves that narrow at the top. The waist was girdled with red-morocco or leather belts, which were adorned with gold, silver, strings, balls, and silver plaquettes, the buckles made of gold, silver, or copper, depending on the social status. The well-off had a large pendant artistically made of gold, or stone. A breastplate with belt, *sch'i'wbgiripx* (щIыIубгырыпх), made of gold or silver was used as adornment.

Caps were made of broadcloth, less often of velvet, but never fur. They were ornamented with a narrow silver and gold galloon round the top and with a wide one round the bottom, and embroidered in satin-stitch. A flowing transparent

white veil covered the cap. Oftentimes, little exquisite silver buttons were sewn round and edged with gilding. Some caps had small tassels dangling from the upper rim. Married women wore their hair in tresses in a style called 'schhenschoqʷ' («щхьэнщокъу»), which differed from that of girls. They wore head covers, usually silk kerchiefs, but kept their faces bare. Older women covered their hair with white cotton shawls.

Ordinary footwear consisted of high-heeled, thick-soled, soft leather shoes. The rich had their shoes elaborately embroidered in gold and silver with silver galloon trimmings. Young women and girls of noble houses used high wooden footwear, *px'evaqe* (пхъэвакъэ), decorated with various bone adornments, and quite often with silver and gilding. These had a height of about 7cm, affording insulation from the mud and dirt when the fair lasses had to go about their business in the courtyard. The size of the feet was arrested at a preset standard by using special shoes. Mittens kept the tender hands spotless.

At the onset of puberty, girls were required to wear corsets (Kabardian: куэншыбэ, *kwenshibe*; Adigean: шъохътан, *schwex'tan*) in the form of short tight-fitting sleeveless vests made from red-morocco, leather or cloth and worn under the chemise. The corset was fastened tight with silk laces and covered the chest right down to the belt. Besides giving support to the body, it served to limit the development of the bosom area, as was demanded by the strict norms of beauty, among which physical symmetry was of paramount importance. Corsets kept being worn (day and night; when worn out, they were replaced by others of equal tightness) until the girl's wedding night.

When eventually the newly-weds were left alone in their quarters, the bridegroom initiated the consummation of the bond by cutting the laces of the corset with his sharp dagger. This required high skill, and the infliction of any scratch on the bride's body, no matter how small, brought a great shame upon the groom. The operation was complicated by the fact that it was interdicted for the bridegroom to see his bride in full glory in her birthday suit.

Young girls did not wear the more modest costumes of women until after their marriage, when they also started to cover the head with a white linen cloth, tied under the chin.



Kabardian female costume, late 19th century.
(Courtesy of adygaunion.com)



Circassian female costume.
(Courtesy of adygaunion.com)

Circassian Male Costume

Circassian male dress was aesthetically designed not only to accentuate the good form of the body, namely narrow waist and broad upper body, but also for convenience and comfort, being well suited for both hot summers and freezing winters. The traditional male costume was perfectly suited for mountain guerrilla warfare and hunting.

The main articles of the costume were the shirt, *cherkesska*, *besmet*, trousers, belt, over-coat, *kalpak* or *papakha* (cap), *baschlhiq* (hood), boots, and underwear. Materials used for male costumes included locally produced leather, sheepskin, wool, woollen cloth, and thick felt. The dagger, without which no Circassian man could be seen, was considered part of the attire. Other armaments were donned, as the occasion demanded. The shirt, trousers, and *besmet* were worn under the *cherkesska*, the *burka* (шлакIуэ; *sch'ak'we* in Circassian) being the over-coat.

Beshmet

The *besmet*, a caftan-like garment, had a narrow waist and reached down to 2-4 inches above the knees. It had string buttons and buttonholes from the waist to the collar, and a stand-up collar and banana sleeves with buttons of the same type. *Beshmets* were made of cotton cloth, woollen cloth, or satin and silk, with the latter used by the richer folk and some people of lesser means on special occasions. Sometimes *besmets* were lined with wool or cotton wool for added warmth. Colours included dull grey, bright red, and blue. In more ancient styles, no undergarment was worn underneath the *besmet*.

Cherkesska

On festive occasions, a *cherkesska* (цей; *tsey*) was worn over the *besmet*. The *cherkesska*, a long-waisted tight fitting outer garment, had become the national Caucasian dress by the eighteenth century, and was a potent folkloric symbol. It was made from tough woven wool, with common colours of black and grey, but other hues were not unknown, including dark blue, red, white, ochre, and brown. The collarless vest was open at the chest with a single button on the waist and reached down to the mid-thighs, with flared sleeves extending beyond the hands, but which were usually rolled up. It was distinctively adorned by a row of 14 to 20 capped cartridge cases [«хъэзыр» ('*hezir*') in Circassian, «газырь» [plural: «газыри»] in Russian), made of nielloed silver or wood, with iron, ivory, stag-

horn, walrus tusk, or silver caps, inserted into flaps sewn on each side of the chest. These cases were initially used as handy stores for gunpowder and lead-shot for personal light muskets, hence the name (=ready). The advent of the repeat rifle in the late nineteenth century reduced the function of the 'hezir' to mere decoration, with cloth loops replacing the cartridge cases.

Shirt & belt

Under the cherkesska, a collared shirt (джанэ; *jane*) made of embroidered (white) linen with a buttoned vertical cut at the front. The narrow leather belt (бгырыпх; *bgiripx*) was adorned with silver platelets and dangling bands, previously used for strapping small cases. The silver-plated belt was worn round the cherkesska and drawn so tight that not even a finger could wriggle through. Dagger and sword sheathes, a pistol case, and a long fusil were attached to the belt. Leather straps on the waist belt carried carved boxes with flints, wads, and gun oil. A sleeveless upper garment (тэджэлей; *tejeley*) was also in use.

Trousers

Trousers (гъуэншэдж; *ghwenshej*), usually made of coarse woollen material, were worn tight and were tucked under knee-high stockings of woollen cloth, usually with leather garters under the knee. The underwear was made of silk.

Over-coat

A sleeveless felt cloak, *sch'ak'we* (щIакIуэ), or *burka* in Turkic, which hanged from the shoulders and covered the whole body, was an indispensable part of the Circassian costume. It was made to fit the shoulders by the insertion of a gore, was tied with strings at the neck, and was often lined with silk or calico. The opening for the neck and the seams over the chest were trimmed with braid. Black and black-brown were the common colours, with white come across not infrequently. Sometimes the wool was not removed on the outside. It afforded warmth in winter by keeping the rain out and insulating the body from the chill. It also protected the wearer from the burning sun. It doubled as a blanket or a personal tent. A small group of men on the road could find shelter by hanging their great coats on three stakes dug into the ground, constructing a rather cozy tepee.¹ In clement weather the coat was rolled up and fastened by long leather rheims behind the saddle.

¹ In accordance with the saying «ЩIакIуэр губгъуэ унэш» ('Sch'ak'wer gwbghwe winesch'), the over-coat was considered as a field house.



Traditional Circassian male costume.

Cap

The basic head-dress consisted of a large round or conical caracul cap called «адыгэ пыІэ» (*Adige pi'e*), better known as '*kalpak*' or '*papakha*', mostly black or grey in colour. A wide-brimmed felt hat was also common. In cold weather, the head was muffled with a *baschlhiq* (башльыкъ;), a hood whose ends could be used as a shawl, slung around the neck, or twirled round the head in the shape of a turban. *Baschlhiqs* were mostly made of wool, but cloth was also used, in which case they were either edged with tasselled Caucasian gold or silver braid, or decorated with ornamental gold piping. Specimens with ornamental designs embroidered in silver or gold thread were also worn for show.

In the olden days, Circassian men shaved their heads, leaving only a tuft of hair on the crown of the head called '*alhtinich'e*' («альтыныкІэ»).^2

Footwear

The usual footwear consisted of soft leather boots, which allowed a 'cat-like' gait, perfect for military manoeuvres.

Masks

Circassian aristocracy donned terrifying masks on their hunting expeditions, apparently to confound the prey, and together with the esoteric cant (шакІуэбзэ, *schak'webze*=language of the chase), render the objects of the hunt unaware of the true purpose of the chevy. According to E. N. Studenetskaya (1980), Kabardian princes, up until the first part of the 19th century, held secretive assemblies after the harvest that lasted for six weeks. In such assemblies, masks were used to hide identity so that the binding article in the code of chivalry on blood-revenge would not disrupt the smooth running of the martial exercises.

² «АльтыныкІэ» (*alhtinich'e*) is a compound word formed of the Turkic 'альтын' ('gold', 'golden') and the Circassian 'кІэ' (here: 'topknot').



'A Circassian chief preparing his stallion'
by the Scotsman Sir William Allan (1782-1850).
The (77 x 64.5 cm) oil on canvas painting was done in 1843.

Personal Weapons

Weapons had had a great bearing on the martial societies of the North Caucasus as far back as the early Bronze Age. They also made up a substantive portion of the export trade, being much sought after by neighbouring peoples and even in far away lands as Persia. The quality of craftsmanship was commensurate with purchasing power, and thus personal arms served as markers of social status. Some instruments of war were only associated with particular classes. For example, exquisite coats-of-mail could only be afforded by the upper classes.

The weaponry of Circassian men traditionally consisted of defensive armour – shirt of mail, a helmet and armlets, and offensive weapons – a bow and arrows, a spear, dart, sabre and dagger. When the fire-arms became widespread in the 18th century, the bow and arrows, the gun and the defensive armour coexisted for some time. As time went on, fire-arms replaced the bow and arrows while the defensive armour, which afforded no protection against bullets, was discarded. Beginning from the second half of the 18th century the armament of a Circassian consisted of a gun, pistol, sabre or cavalry sword, and a dagger.



Full weapon set of Kabardian warrior
(sword with sword-belt, dagger, pistol, cartridge cases).
The set was presented to Tzarevich Nikolai Alexandrovich
(future emperor Nicholas II) in 1888 by a North Caucasian deputation.
[[The Russian Museum of Ethnography](http://eng.ethnomuseum.ru/) <http://eng.ethnomuseum.ru/>]

Manufacture of arms was intimately connected with the structure of the military system of the Circassians. All North Caucasians held their personal arms in the highest esteem and always maintained them in tip-top shape. A mountaineer never went out of his house without his dagger. Every male person, even young boys, had one. Fine specimens were handed down from father to son. Some households still keep old daggers and other arms as priceless heirlooms.

A warrior who lost his weapons in battle was held in contempt forever after. According to custom, a man was buried with the full complements of his arms. Gunsmiths and armourers took their craft to uncharted heights. In each village

there were two or three artisans specializing in producing arms. Nowadays, daggers are mostly made as souvenirs.

Early weapons uncovered among the treasure-troves in the mounds of Maikop culture included stone maces and battle-axes. Of particular importance were Eneolithic and Bronze Ages weapons in the Burial Mound 31 in the village of Novosvobodnaya, consisting of blades and flint triangular arrow-heads, possibly used in harpoon-like missiles.



Flint arrow-heads. The dagger blade is leaf-shaped being sharp along the edges. Grooves on both sides of the butt allow the blade to be attached securely to the handle. Maikop culture, middle of 3rd millennium BC. The Hermitage.

There is a large collection of late medieval Circassian swords and daggers found at excavation sites near Maikop displayed in the Historical Museum of Moscow. Some of the exhibits had inscriptions and were dated to the 16th and 17th centuries AD. There has also been a large haul of weapons unearthed in

Kabardian sepulchral mounds that go back to the 15th to 16th centuries AD. These finds represent the Eastern Circassian version of the Belorechenskaya Culture (Belorechenskaya is situated to the northwest of Maikop) in Adigea.



Dagger and belt. The *game* (къамэ) is synonymous with the mountaineers' warrior tradition. Nevertheless, very few old daggers have been handed down, since they were never regarded as treasured heirlooms. Unlike sabres and cavalry swords, these were simply personal effects reforged when worn-out.

A coat of mail was made by connecting polished steel rings each to four adjoining ones to form a metal fabric. Between 20-30 thousand annuli were used, depending on the size. It afforded protection to the torso down to the knees. The Kabardian version was so well made that the Shah of Persia ordered that it be used in his army. A few hauberks that go back to the 16th and 17th centuries are kept in the Kremlin Armoury.

The helmet was a hybrid of conical and pyramidal shapes and was made of steel with an attached net of ringlets hanging down to the shoulders for protection. Usually date of manufacture and name of artisan were etched on outstanding pieces. A specimen decorated with silver pieces and dated to 1780 was found. Steel plates decorated with traditional Circassian motifs covered the arms from

the elbow to the wrist. Articulation was effected by leather bands or metal rings. Gloves made of opulent red or black leather afforded some protection to the hands. The gauntlets were decorated with gold or silver thread, with hooked horns embroidered in the middle being a trademark of Circassian handicraftsmen.



Princely war costume.

Bows were composed of two layers, the inner one made of animal horns and the outer one of wood. Strings were made from animal tendons boiled in fish glue. The arrows were made by men, the quiver by household women using luxury black leather decorated with gold and silver threads. The bow and quiver were tied round the waist. Pallas described a lance-like weapon in shape of a strong staff, about 1.5m long, on top of which was fixed a large iron head, the lower end having a sharp iron pike, about 45cm long.

Of special interest are bayonet-like rapiers designed to penetrate coats of mail. In the 17th century, the Circassians innovated a cavalry weapon in form of a two-edged long dagger without a cross-guard. It was about 75cm long, as compared to 100-114cm for the conventional sword. The circular hilt was made of either silver or ivory and its head was slightly hooked. Making scabbards was a feminine craft. Two moulded pieces of wood were covered first with leather, then with velvet, and fixed with gold thread and metal sheets. In their campaigns in Central Asia, Terek and Greben Cossacks used a tactic to overcome long spears with sabres, which they called 'to drive in the Kabardian way.'

Hafts of sabres and daggers, pistols and rifles were ornamented with gold and silver inlay, encrustation, wood, bone and niello. In more elaborate designs semi-precious stones were used. Firearms were first introduced in the North Caucasus in the 16th century, but they only became wide-spread in the 18th. Some Circassian pistols made in 1840-50 are on show in museums in Moscow and St Petersburg. Women made leather holsters.

Circassians produced gunpowder for their muskets. The main stock of powder was stored in a flask made of horn, ivory or wood, and kept dry and safe by wrapping it with morocco decorated with gold, silver and ivory. The covers were made of decorated silver. The powder flask was hung at the belt. Handy quantities of powder were kept in the *hezirs*, 14-20 cartridge cases made of nielloed silver, or wood, inserted into flaps, on the breast of the cherkesska. Mild powder for bolts of rifles and pistols was kept in a small special powder flask from which the powder was spilled. It was also hung at the belt.

Alim Ch'ischoqwe's (КЪШОКЪУЭ АЛИМ; АЛИМ КЕШОКОВ) poem 'THE CHERKESSKA', from *Starlit Hours*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981, p45.

THE CHERKESSKA

Where whispering winds above the cherry-trees float,
Where morning's pallid coat-flaps curl,
A bold Caucasian wore his *cherkesska* coat,
Sewn by some darksome Circassian girl.

While galloping at full stretch he'd take sure aim,
He tried to be the ace in every race,
And in his heart he kept his loved one's name,
And powder in each cartridge case.

And every ploughman underneath the blue,
And every mower above the gold,
Bore on his breast those sixteen cartridges too,
Which tight the black gunpowder hold.

Where waters beat down upon the stony cheek
Of the ravine, uprearing tall,
The *cherkesska* sat well on a waggoner's back,
And on the general at the ball.

By generations in high honour kept,
This custom not for nought we note:
The face of him who on the battlefield slept
Was covered by his *cherkesska* coat.

It might be white, like a field in hoary frost,
Or black as a furrow in the dale,
But the name "*Cherkesska*" never will be lost.
To change it tongues will ever fail.

Translated by Walter May

Proverbs and sayings associated with costumes and clothe items

[The entries are in Kabardian, unless otherwise stated]

АнэкIэ кьуашIэм кьуэсу мэпсэу (Anech'e qwasch'em qwesu mepsew): He lives under (behind) his mother's skirt.

Анэм и гьуапэр пхьум и джанэщ: The mother's sleeve is the daughter's shirt.

Бгырыпх пцIанэ: Girdled without a dagger (literally: 'naked waist-belt).

Вакъэжьыльгэ шынэркъым: An old boot doesn't fear the mud.

Гуэбэнэч и щIагь лы кьыщIокI: (A he-man emerges from a herdsman's clothes) 1. A little body often harbours a great soul; 2. Little bodies may have great souls.

Гьуапэкъым, пщампIэкъым: (Neither a sleeve nor a collar) Neither one thing nor the other.

Гьунэгьурэ гьуэншэджрэ (A neighbour is like a pair of trousers): Better a close neighbour than a distant relative.

Джанэ нэхьрэ гьуэншэдж нэхь благъэщ: The trousers are nearer than the shirt.

ЖьантIэм узэрыдашэр щыгьынырщ (Zchant'em wizeridasher schighinirsch): Fine feathers make fine birds.

ЗекIуэ и вакъэ лажьэркъым (Жэрдэм зыщIэм, лажьэм зыгуэр кьелэжь, жыхуиIэщ): (The campaigner's shoes do not wear out) He who displays initiative shall earn something for his troubles.

Зи вакъэ зэврэ зи гьавэ мащIэрэ: Tight shoes and a little yield.

КъэзышагьащIэм щIакIуэщIэрэ кIуэкIэщIэрэ кьэщтэ: A newly-married man gets a new (felt) cloak and assumes a new gait.

Къуийм и пыIэ щыгьупщэркъым: He who has the mange forgets not his cap.

Къуийм и пыIэр щхьэрыхумэ, укIытэжьыркъым: If the cap of the mangy person falls off, he is not ashamed any more.

Льакъуэ кьуаншэ вакъэ хуэщI (Вакъэ куэдрэ кьэщэху, жыхуиIэщ. *Many shoes are bought for it*): A crooked foot is lucky with shoes.

Мастэнэм кьызэрыфIэчауэ: Spick and span, brand-new; just out of a bandbox (of clothes).

ПыIэ зыщхьэрыгь: (Person wearing a cap) 1. Man, male; 2. Real man, he-man.

ПыIэ зыщхьэрыгь псори лIыкIым: Not all those who put hats on are men.

ПыIэ Iей нэIу Iейщ: Bad hat, bad face.

ПыIээфIэхь махуэщ (ПыIээфIэхь=Circassian game in which horsemen snatch a cap away from one another, the object of the game being to carry away the cap; it requires both skill and strength. Iуэху щIэным и гуащIэгъуэщ, жыхуиIэщ. *Said of a day of hard toil*).

Уэшх блэIам щIакIуэ кIэлъумыщтэ(ж) (Weshx blech'am sch'ak'we ch'elhumischte[zh]): (After the storm, don't put on the felt cloak) 1. After death the doctor; 2. After dinner, mustard.

Узэчэнджэщын умыгъуэтмэ, уи пыIэ гъэтIыси ечэнджэщыж: If you can't find somebody to talk things over with, take off your hat and consult it.

Узэчэнджэщын умыгъуэтым, уи пыIэр гъэтIылы ечэнджэщ (Wizechenjeschin wimighwetim, wiy pi'er ghet'ilhiy yechenjesch): If you can't find somebody to talk things over with, take off your hat and consult it.

УзытеIуэм пэIум уахегъэн (Фашэм, щыгъыным щысхьын хуейщ, иужькIи цIыхум уарихыхьэн щхьэкIэ, жыхуиIэщ): You must spare your clothes so that you could get into the company of others.

Уи гъунэгъур уи гъуапэщ: Your neighbour is your sleeve.

Уи пыIэ угъурлы ухьу!: Bless your cap! [Said to a newly-married man]

Хьазыриир пым пай, ябгъуанэрэр шыум пай: The eight cartridge cases are for the enemy, the ninth for the horseman. [Adigean. The cherkesska (*tsey*), the distinctive long-waisted, tight-fitting circassian tunic, was – and still is – a potent folkloric symbol donned by almost all peoples of the Caucasus. It was adorned by a row of (usually white) capped cartridge cases (*hezir*) made of nielloed silver, or wood, inserted into flaps sewn on each side of the breast. These cartridge cases were usually used to store gunpowder and leadshot for personal light muskets. However, one of the cases was filled with flour, to be used in extreme situations to satisfy one's hunger]

ЩауэщIэм и щIакIуэри и кIуэкIэри дахэщ: The (felt) cloak and gait of a new bridegroom are beautiful.

Щхьэр псэумэ, пыIэ щыщIэркIым: If the head is alive, it will not lack a cap.

Щыгъынибгъу нэхьрэ теубгъуэн (Щыгъын куэд уиIэ нэхьрэ тепIэнщIэлъын, жыхуиIэщ): To have your bedding is better than nine complements of clothes.

ЩIакIуэ нэхьрэ уэшх нэхь благъэщ: 1. Rain is nearer than the great coat (over-coat); 2. Always be prepared.

Щаклуэ ныкзуэщыр шыгъынкъым (шыгъын=clothes; garments): A half-finished (felt) cloak cannot be worn.

Щаклуэ щлагъым лы кыщлокI (*епль аргуэру* «Гуэбэнэч и щлагъ лы кыщлокI»): 1. A little body often harbours a great soul; 2. Little bodies may have great souls.

Щаклуэр губгъуэ унэщ (Sch'ak'wer gwbghe winesch): The great coat (overcoat) is a field house.

ЩаклуитI шыгъын (Sch'ak'wyt' schighin): (To put on two cloaks) To be on both sides of the fence.

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- Dode, Z. V., 'Middle Costume of the Caucasian People in the Context of the Nart Epic', in *Nauchnaya misl Kavkaza* [Scientific Thought of the Caucasus], vol. 1, 1997. [In Russian. 'Ethnic costumes may be used as sources of research to understand the history of a region, particularly in the absence of writing evidences, left by prehistoric peoples in the Middle Ages. Costumes have an important role in revealing the matter of Middle Age costumes – its symbolism, manner of wearing, connected with the ideological representations found in oral folk legends formed on the Caucasus, for example, the Nart Epic. Legends and tales of the people of Caucasus represent particular value in the quality of sources, because clothes, head-dress and shoes were made and worn by the people who wrote the Epic, and in this the authors also revealed something of the Epic's meaning. Archaeologists have found evidence that the form of costumes of the Caucasus in the Middle Ages came in the general course of development of the material culture. To explain, an interpretation of the Epic shows Caucasian peoples as having separate cultural identities, but the clothes were used in similar ways. This means the mode of culturisation is similar in all regions. Others have reviewed different parts of Caucasian medieval costume. Costume is a form of historical resource. We must open what it means for material culture and ideology of mountain peoples. They had internal interaction through etiquette, and with other peoples in the discourse of trade. Review of costumes may show signs of social and economic traits. In conclusion, this archaeological material can be used for interpreting the society of the medieval period. This material rests in the course of the Nart Epic, and with it historical events and occurrences which happened in Caucasus in the Middle Ages confirm community. Moreover, the formation of the material culture of the peoples of the Caucasus contained in the Epic are like an artistic representation, reflecting historical reality.']

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