Just like England: On the Liberal Institutions of the Circassians

PAUL MANNING

Trent University

Upper Abûn, Monday, 5th June, 1837.—We staid for three days with the host at Ankhur, who demurred, and then we moved a little distance westward to the hamlet of three brothers, in a richer portion of the plain, whose clumps of stately oaks, verdant meadows, and heavy crops of corn, brought England vividly before me. Mr. L. has frequently exclaimed, "This is just like England!"

——James Stanislaus Bell, *Journal of a Residence in Circassia* (1840.1: 135).

INTRODUCTION

With Pushkin's narrative poem *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1822), Circassians entered the Russian imperial imaginary as exemplary personifications of the savagery and freedom of the Caucasus as a whole (Layton 1994; 1997; Grant 2005; 2007). Accordingly, the Russian imagination of Circassian polity, now as egalitarian "free societies," now as hierarchical aristocracies, now as "noble savages," now as ignoble brutes, Muslim "fanatics," or "Asiatic despots," was a microcosm of the Russian colonial engagement with the Caucasus as a whole, often as not reflecting tensions in the self-perception of imperial autocracy and its elites more than indigenous political organization of Caucasian groups like Circassians in reality (Layton 1997; Jersild 2002; Grant 2005). Inasmuch as such imperial imaginings informed the fantasies of young men, causing them to enlist in search of the poetry of warfare, or informed fantasies of conquest among agents of the Russian state, these imaginings became real in their consequences for various Caucasian groups (Layton 1994; 1997). Nor was the exemplary alterity accorded Circassians limited to Russian audiences; it exerted a considerable fascination across Europe as well (King 2007: 241–45).

Importantly for Circassians themselves, Russian imaginings of Circassians were not the only ones that were of consequence in this period of the Great Game, for British observers also played a consequential role (for Circassian perspectives, see Shami 2007). The peculiarity of the Circassian social order, containing "feudal" distinctions of hereditary caste but situated within a generally egalitarian "acephalous" segmentary political structure, afforded both Russians and British observers the possibility to see what they wanted in the indigenous political order. Accordingly, Russian observers often interpreted the hierarchical dimension of Circassian social structure as being ripe for some sort of strategy of indirect rule, specifically the cooptation of princes into Russian State service nobility. By contrast, British observers saw in Circassian egalitarianism a miniature Liberal revolution in the making.[1]

As King notes, British interventions in Russian and Ottoman imperial ventures tend to begin with a personal eccentricity. Starting in the 1830s, David Urquhart (1805–1877), a maverick British diplomat, had become so enamored of Circassians and their cause that he designed a national flag for a united Circassia, and attempted to provoke the Palmerston government into a war with Russia over the issue (King 2007). One of Urquhart's legacies to Circassia were two British travelers, J. A. Longworth and James Stanislaus Bell, both of whom traveled in Circassia at Urquhart's urging for longish periods in the late 1830s at the time of a major Russian invasion. Both these travelers could be described as spies but for the fact that they represented no government or state (see Jersild 2002: 14–15 for Russian perceptions of Bell). Both left detailed accounts which represent the bulk of the ethnographic information about pre-conquest Circassia. Like their Russian counterparts, in the accounts

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[1] On a global scale, both the British and the Russians showed similar tensions, and similar possibilities, in how they would view colonized social orders. Even as the British would extol acephalous "village communities" as a being a model form of social life akin to their own Briton or Saxon communities, they would also nostalgically delight in and foster a "medieval" or "feudal" hierarchical aristocratic ordering of colonial societies. Indeed, their own system of indirect rule would ultimately depend on strategies of co-optation not very different from the classic Russian one (Kuklick 1991: ch. 6; Metcalf 1995: ch. 3; Cannadine 2001 emphasizes only the latter possibility). This paper is in no sense about the complex and ambivalent Russian representations of Caucasian polities, on which there is already an excellent literature that I will not attempt to summarize here (Layton 1994; 1997; Jersild 1997; 2002; Grant 2005; 2007; 2009). However, I will note here that popular Romantic writings about the Caucasus in this same period, such as Marlinsky's 1832 novel *Ammalat Bek*, ambivalently depict a Caucasus in which the primary political divide is geographical: between the servile "Tatars" of the plains, who can be ruled by indirect rule through pliant but often treacherous indigenous nobles like the eponymous *Ammalat Bek*, and the free, often savage, mountaineers, such as the Chechens and Avars, who can only be dealt with by coercion and exile, but whose worlds represent an unattainable fantasy of wild freedom from autocracy (Layton 1994; 1997; Grant 2005; 2007). In fact, *Ammalat Bek* is as much a novel about Russian distrust of traitorous indigenous rulers of the plains as it is a projective fantasy of the freedom of the hills and escape from Russian autocracy (Layton 1994: ch. 7). Such an invidious Russian distinction between free mountaineers of the Caucasus and servile plains-dwellers (Layton 1994: 10–11) also provides an important context for Georgian self-understandings of their relationship to the Caucasus and empire beginning in this period (Manning 2004; 2008; Ram and Shatirishvili 2004).

of these men there is no pretense of neutrality. The main differences between the Russian and British representations of Circassia stem directly from the different political projects in which they were embedded. For this reason both Russian and British accounts are singularly interested in giving an account of Circassian political order, and for similar reasons give often entirely opposed versions of its structure and internal dynamics. Russian representations of Circassians and their institutions were contradictory, now representing fantasies of autonomy and erotic self-fulfillment characteristic of Tsarist elites, in which case the Circassian social order might be considered "free societies" composed entirely of brigands, or now representing equally fantastic state projects for indirect rule, assuming that the Circassian social order contained caste divisions of nobility and serfs that could be readily assimilated to those of the Russian empire.

These British travelers, Bell and Longworth, were, on the other hand, minor quasi-private emissaries from Urquhart, the first secretary to the British Embassy at Constantinople. In 1836 Urquhart induced his friends the Bells, who were English merchants residing in Istanbul, to fit out a ship, the *Vixen*, with a shipment of salt for the Circassian coast, then under Russian blockade, as a pretext to assert the commercial rights of English trade with Circassia. After two days the Russians seized the ship. The resulting "affair of the *Vixen*" (which financially ruined the Bells) was intended to spur the Palmerston government into action. J. A. Longworth, Esq. was a correspondent for the *Times* in Istanbul with extensive contacts amongst the resident Caucasian communities, whom Urquhart resorted to frequently as an agent. Both Longworth and Bell were acting in Circassia in the late 1830s much as Urquhart himself had done in 1834, as independent agents fomenting resistance to Russian invasion.

What is remarkable about the accounts of these two men is not merely the extremely detailed ethnographic remarks interspersed through their narratives, but also the way that their very failures to achieve their ends—rallying Circassians into a unified state to resist the Russians—led to more complex understandings of Circassian institutions. It also led to fundamental disagreements between the two men. Bell, whose knowledge of Circassian institutions and language was based on three years of residence, is usually considered to be the sounder of the two ethnographically. But for all Bell's descriptive accuracy, including the use of Circassian terminology, he remained unable (such is Longworth's opinion) to see what it was in Circassian institutions that prevented the formation of a "government." This same frustration, by contrast, finally led Longworth, by an act of radical translation, to attempt to see in Circassian institutions an uncanny form of Liberalism that was both strikingly familiar and yet completely strange.[2] It was precisely the fact that these two men were

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[2] By "Liberalism," I am referring to early-nineteenth-century Liberalism, in itself a construct of presuppositions shared in some cases even by Tory Whigs like Burke (Metcalf 1995: ch. 2).

interested actors and not disinterested observers that caused them to revise their accounts of the Circassian polity by virtue of the resistance it presented to their presuppositions and fantasies.

Both men were engaged fairly directly in attempting to unify the Circassian forces against the Russians, and at the same time force the English government to become embroiled against Russia in this matter. Yet they were foiled in both directions, in Britain by the Palmerston government's refusal to pursue the matter of the seizure of the *Vixen*, on the Circassian side by the lack of any state-like political structure that they could be said to "represent" in Britain or "represent" Britain to, or that could serve to unify the indubitable military strength of Circassia in the concerted fashion needed to deal the Russians a major defeat. Of the two travelers, Bell remained convinced of the self-evident value of Urquhart's attempts to unify Circassians into a state, while Longworth grew increasingly skeptical that this was even possible given the basic presuppositions of the Circassian political order. From this perspective, Longworth's attempt to understand the source of the difficulties for political unification latent in Circassian political institutions is what renders his work so interesting, both his attempt to understand Circassians in terms of the categories of Liberalism, and at the same time his attempt to show the incommsensurability of Circassian categories with those of Liberalism. It was these two features, the combination of a deeply interested attempt to see Liberalism writ large in all Circassian institutions, as well as the frustrating inability to find a political structure recognizable and manipulable in ordinary diplomatic fashion, I will argue, that make Longworth's ethnography so fascinating in matters political, and, indeed, one of the more interesting attempts to understand "segmentary" political systems, so-called "stateless societies," one hundred years before Evans-Pritchard's own attempt to do the same for the Nuer (Evans-Prichard 1940; Asad 1973; Caton 1987; Kuklick 1991: 271–77; McKinnon 2000; Sneath 2007).

This article, then, grows out of Asad's classic study of the colonial background informing different European images of non-European rule (1973). Longworth's engaged position as an interested agent of no state, ethnographic observer *avant la lettre*, and for Circassians, a "witness from civilization," bears comparison with the similarly multiple conflicting roles which informed Evans-Pritchard's famous representation of the Nuer as a "acephalous kinship state," with no "chief" able to serve as an agent of indirect rule. We can also see in the comparison the durability of British Liberal political imaginaries that saw the political categories of the British past writ large in the categories of rule of the non-European present, variously nostalgic images of egalitarian Anglo-Saxon village communities and ordered feudal or medievalist hierarchies, along with, of course, oriental despotisms (Metcalf 1995: ch. 3; Kuklick 1991: 242; Cannadine 2001). Lastly, it bears comparison with the epistemes of non-European rule that Asad (1973) associates in his seminal study with

disciplines of Orientalism, which emphasized *coercion* as the basis of fragmentary Middle Eastern polities (placed in radical disjuncture with an integrated Islamic "society") and factored out the growing presence of European power, and British functional anthropology in Africa, which instead factored out the normalized colonial presence of coercion in the form of the British colonial state and indirect rule (as "administrative problems" and "social change") to produce idealized images of polities, which were at the same moment societies, ruled by consent and immune to historical change. Coercion derives from a repressive non-identity between polity and society, and consent corresponds to situations where polity and society are identical (Asad 1973: 114; see also Caton 1987; McKinnon 2000). Asad brilliantly draws our attention to the different colonial political and disciplinary contexts that form the epistemic conditions for quite different *interested* representations of non-European rule. It is this aspect of Asad's classic article, and the literature that grows from it, that informs the approach of this article, which focuses on the epistemic role that interested engagement plays in Longworth's and Bell's representations of the Circassian polity.

"THE MISUNDERSTANDING WAS ENTIRELY ABOUT WORDS": TRANSLATION AND POLITICS

My objective here is to show how Longworth's interested encounter with Circassia, and his search for a Circassian polity that he could engage in a practical manner, led him into more detailed analysis of Circassian political structures, and, indeed, of the basic presuppositions of Liberalism (itself a universalizing and naturalizing framework) that he was using as a vocabulary of analysis. Longworth's strategy to understand the alterity of the Circassian political order was to cast it heuristically into the language of Liberalism itself, so as to reveal the different presuppositions that prevented the translation of an alien political order into Circassia. Bell, by contrast, typically represented the alterity of Circassian institutions using indigenous terminology (lending him greater ethnographic authority, in retrospect). But for all of Bell's valuable factual exposition (down to daily temperature readings), he never seemed to understand what these institutions meant for his own project of political translation. Despite repeated failure, Bell never really discarded the basic premises that he shared with Urquhart that Circassians in effect needed but a symbol to rally around, and their self-evident moral unity (of language and custom) would lead automatically to the formation of a polity. In Longworth's case, the frustration of their initial direct translation and transplantation led to a more complex analysis of Circassian political orders, still cast ambivalently in terms of Liberalism. This allowed him to see the Circassian polity as being essentially "just like England": to see in Circassians a kind of approximation of English yeomanry, and in Circassian political structures a kind of implicit Liberalism. However, it also allowed him to determine what was the cause

of their frustration: their concomitant inability to locate state-like structures that could be the germ of a Circassian state.

The difference between the two men would seem to boil down to a difference in translational styles: Bell's style emphasized the denotational semantico-referential aspect of translation, which is presumably why he is considered the better, "more objective" ethnographer. Longworth highlighted the pragmatic or per-formative effectiveness of translation (Silverstein 1979). Bell's faithfulness to Circassian terminology emphasized an Orientalizing alterity, while Long-worth's use of terminology from British Liberalism stressed an Occidentalizing identification between Circassian and British institutions, even as it allowed him to represent the unfamiliarity of Circassian institutions on a ground of essential familiarity.

At the beginning, the project of unifying Circassians under a single govern-ment seemed quite simple and natural to both men. Bell offered various "proofs" of the moral unity of Circassia, including shared language ("Adighe") (Bell 1840, 2: 53–54), which led him to assume that such moral similarities would in due course cause them to congeal into a national cause. Longworth even arrived with a copy of the *sanjak sharif*, the putative flag of united Circassia, designed by Urquhart (and currently adopted as the symbol of Circassia) (King 2007). He too assumed that this object would have a self-evident symbolic value to Circassians, as it did for the English public who were, perhaps, the more familiar with its symbolism and purpose than Circas-sians. In fact, Longworth even used this flag itself, and the device upon it ("white arrows and stars on a field of green silk" [Longworth 1840, 1: 67]) when talking to Circassians as an icon of his argument of the strength of a united Circassia. For Longworth, the symbolism of the flag was as transparent and natural as the categories "order, union, and recognized authority" that seemed to him to form the natural substrate of the state symbolized by this flag (ibid.: 70–71).

But for Circassians, the *sanjak sharif* was no more transparent than the notions of "order, union and recognized authority" that it stood for. For Long-worth, if not for Bell, the frustrated experience of attempting to locate state-like structures among Circassians seems to have provoked a deeper revision of his own understanding of his role in Circassia. The occasion for this was his dis-covery of a grand project of social reform emanating from within Circassian institutions, what he called the "national oath," an "internal reform" already begun years earlier during Urquhart's visit (King 2007: 249–50). The discov-ery of the "national oath" occasions Longworth's own retrospective realization of the futility of engaging Circassian polities in policies that presuppose modern states, and his subsequent revision of his own position from something like ambassador from a European state (which he never was, in any case) to something more like a witness or emissary from civilization, embodying a kind of Habermasian "representative publicness" (Habermas 1991), before

whom one might swear a particularly solemn oath. The problem seemed to be one of translation:

It will be my task, and no very easy one, considering its complication, to unravel the nature and progress of this reform hereafter. I now allude to it, that the reader may perceive how little at the time we understood our relative position, and how trivial the objects by which we were actuated, when compared with those that were fermenting in the minds and hearts of the Circassians. He will see also why we found it so difficult to understand each other, and why, *mezzotermine*, we at length came to adopting the character of ambassadors on our own account, which appeared so ridiculous to us, but was, on the contrary, so satisfactory to them. The misunderstanding was entirely about words; what they wanted was not ambassadors, but witnesses—witnesses from the civilized world, whom they sought to propitiate by a solemn abjuration of the usages that were obnoxious to it (Longworth 1840, 1: 186–88).

While the other Englishmen, Mr. Bell and the mysterious aristocratic fop styled "Nadir Bey" (Mr. Knight), never seem to have fully reconciled themselves to the incommensurability of their reform projects with Circassian political institutions, Longworth seems to have done just that. He did so by the curious mechanism of effecting a direct translation of Circassian institutions into familiar English Liberal ones, so their differences at once become plain, and yet these differences are once again encompassed within the categories of English Liberalism.

This attempted translation was not merely linguistic, but also embedded in Longworth's pragmatic "projects of reform," in which he sought to either introduce European institutions of government felt to be lacking, or seized on the nearest equivalents that could be adapted for the purpose. Both men operated with the broad horizons of a universal Liberal narrative of political progress and unitary "civilization" that served as an enabling condition for their action (Metcalf 1995: ch. 2). This allowed them to see their actions as progress, and Russian imperial plans as retarding progress. Bell plausibly argued that the process of radical leveling discernable within Circassian society was the effects of commerce as well as Islam, with a particularly crucial democratizing role played by technical innovations in warfare, particularly rifles, that produced a Circassian equivalent of the Athenian "hoplite revolution" (see Derluguian 2007):

Here, as elsewhere, the revolution which has taken place in the system of warfare, attendant upon the introduction of commerce, has contributed to produce a revolution in the grades of society . . . . Many of the Tokavs [freemen], and even of the serfs, have become by trade (to be engaged in which is generally considered to be degrading for the other two classes) much richer than most of the nobles and princes, and therefore capable of providing means to protect themselves. To these causes of the declining influence of the aristocracy has, however, to be added . . . one of still greater efficacy . . . viz. the advocacy of the Turks of an entire equality, as founded on the principles of the Koran, that all men are equal in the sight of God (Bell 1840, 1: 402–4).

Russian influence, he argues, will reverse this trend, as Circassian nobilities will become a Russian service nobility (*dvoriane*), as, indeed, was the case with many other indigenous nobilities in the Caucasus[3]:

If, on the other hand, [Circassia] shall become a province of Russia, another and totally different process will commence; the power and influence of the nobles will then be revived, but their ancient basis—the respect of the people, as well as the birth-right of antique descent—will (for the process is at work in Russia) be gradually destroyed; and the good-will of the emperor, as evinced by the military rank he may confer, will become the substitute; and some future traveller will probably find in the manners of the Circassian noble, that the dignified composure and simple elegance which now characterize him have become replaced by military arrogance and awkward imitation of European fashion (Bell 1840, 1: 404).

At the broadest level, both men were confident that the Circassian social revolution was a species of the universal leveling tendencies observable in Europe: democratization of warfare, proliferation of trade, Islam replacing Protestantism as a leveling ideology. It was not at the level of grand narrative, then, but at the level of specific political institutions that the practical problem of translation seemed to fail. At the beginning, Longworth admitted, they had attempted to seize on the existing political structure of the Circassian council, seeing in it a parliament writ large but for its lack of permanence, and sought to rectify this by attempting to create a permanent one, among other reforms. Longworth gives a good account of the way that the seeming stolid good sense of these plans for introducing "government" ("measures of internal organization" [Longworth 1840, 2: 27]) came to naught:

The chief of these [measures of internal organization] was the establishment of a permanent council, invested with administrative authority, and a standing force, however small, for the contingencies of the campaign. Mr. Bell was also desirous of forming a corps from the Polish deserters. But these innovations, simple as they might appear, and prompted, moreover, by the necessity of the times, were such as I afterwards found involved great organic changes in the customs and social institutions of the country. The associations on which the personal security and independence of the Circassians depend, are maintained by them with a pride and tenacity which renders the introduction of any other elements of power, for national and political purposes, a matter of very great difficulty. It is true that the national councils ... have, from a sense of urgent necessity, more than once been invested with paramount authority; but that it should be delegated to any particular body of individuals, or exercised for any specific period or purpose, is an idea to which they could not for a moment reconcile themselves (Longworth 1840, 2: 28).

This experiment had, in fact, been tried before. At the advice of another Englishman twelve elders had formed a permanent administration at Semez: "finding, however, that instead of commanding respect and obedience, they

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[3] Indeed, in some places in the Caucasus where there were no indigenous nobles that could serve, the Russians even created indigenous service nobles amongst free mountain communities along the strategically crucial Georgian military highway.

were fast becoming the laughing-stocks of the whole country" (ibid.: 29), these elders returned to their hamlets to preserve whatever authority they had left. Longworth adds to the objections to renewing the experiment that there would be no remuneration for the office and its projects, or any means of collecting revenue, nor any currency in which the revenue could be collected in liquid form. All of these reasons also militated against the formation of a standing army (ibid.: 29–30). Longworth added an even longer list of problems with Bell's proposal for a Polish corps that would take advantage of the large numbers of Polish slaves and refugees in Circassia (ibid.: 30–31), and noted that Bell (himself apparently of Polish extraction) seems to have remained fascinated with this impractical idea (ibid.: 31). Longworth adduces similar objections to Nadir Bey's Byronesque aristocratic fantasy of attaching himself and his supplies of gunpowder to a powerful "chief":

Nadir Bey—for this was the *nom de guerre* adopted by the [British] newcomer—was not (what I supposed he might be) an agent of the British government. He was a volunteer in the cause, a gentleman of fortune who had not even the excuse of a younger brother for seeking adventures, being impelled thereto by the genuine spirit of chivalry, which so few in this age of cold calculation can even appreciate, and of which Burke has so feelingly lamented the decline . . . . He had not the least idea of the independence which prevails in Circassia, where, since the decline of the Pshees [princes], the chiefs have so little real power, and where every man is at liberty to take the field or remain home as he chooses, having for the most part a decided objection to fighting for anybody's interest or amusement but his own (ibid.: 171–72).

In order to explain the fallacies upon which these projects are based, Longworth insisted that one had to avoid the mistake of assuming that the local form of "government" was to be found amongst the local princes. Rather, the Circassian princes represented elements inimical to both germinating state and existing society. A central point of Longworth's analysis was that while Circassians lacked anything that could be called a government, they did not exist in a Lockean state of nature. Longworth followed a generally Lockean vision of the genesis of government, in which the formation of society is formally distinct from the formation of government, but generally the formation of society is immediately attended by the formation of government. In Longworth's analysis, this formal distinction became a real distinction: Circassians seemed to have hesitated after the creation of society, and neglected to form a government. They were a stateless society.

Detectable within this portion of his argument concerning the function of society without a state is a second assumption that appears here and there, which is that Circassians' lack of political institutions was in some sense what made them Liberal. This required a particular understanding of Liberal institutions as being the result of naturalizing reforms of artificial institutions bequeathed by feudal aristocratic orders. This becomes clear in his elucidation of the privileges constitutive of princely authority and distinction, where, it seems, slight differences in the order of signifiers coded vast differences on

the order of the signified. (It should be noted that both Longworth and Bell preferred the mannered company of princes to the rude company of the commoners whose virtues they otherwise extolled.) Therefore, to understand Circassian institutions, Longworth uses names from familiar English institutions characteristic of Liberalism of some form or another, even as he elucidates their substantial difference from their cognate terms. Thus, Circassian *tokums* are "Joint Stock companies," Circassian councils work on a principle of "virtual representation," and so on. Longworth's argument begins with broadly Lockean premises that government is essential for the preservation of property, broadly construed, and then argues backward from this that while Circassians do, indeed, live in a Lockean state of society, they lack government. Moreover, so far from the former naturally giving rise to the latter, there seem to be certain ways in which the society is constructed that render the emergence of the latter difficult.

I will look in detail at three such comparisons of Circassian institutions that, on one hand, Longworth considered possible bases on which to build a Circassian government, and which, at the very same time, represented serious obstacles to introducing government amongst them. These are: (1) the "feudal" order of the princes and their privileges, inimical to both government and society; (2) the "societies" or "tribes," which are extraterritorial forms of organization which Longworth identifies with "society"; and (3) the *medjilis* or "council," which represents the *memlekhet* or "country," a territorial form of organization in which Longworth saw a form of Burkean "virtual representation." But finally, (4) Longworth, following Urquhart (King 2007: 249–50), found in the "national oath" and related internal reforms that tend to unite Circassians and "level" distinctions of rank between them an extended analogy that both Longworth and Bell drew with the Liberal revolution in England. It was the "national oath" that was most responsive to the particular conditions of Circassia, and, as Longworth finally deduced, Circassians valued these British travelers as "witnesses from civilization" who added ritual solemnity and publicness to this oath, rather than as pragmatic ambassadors from foreign states.

LORDS OF MISRULE: CIRCASSIAN PRINCES

Longworth lays out his central argument on the nature of the Circassian political system in Volume 1, Chapter XI of his work, in a chapter entitled "An Account of the Institutions of the Circassians." His point of departure is a broadly Lockean one, namely, the surprising "general security of life and property" (1840, 1: 224) in the absence of a government. He contrasts the imagined state of affairs, which accentuates Circassian in his imagined persona, familiar from Pushkin (and generally the whole Russian imagination of Circassia), as a brigand (*abrek*) (Grant 2005; 2007), with the empirical reality dominated by the

institution which is its mirror image, the *konag* ("host"), which Longworth takes as the central guarantor of safety of life and property ("passport"):

[The stranger's] imagination, as he wanders through its narrow defiles and gloomy forests, 'a boundless contiguity of shade,' would naturally people the whole with banditti, and present to him the lurking brigand at every turn and obscuration of the road. A journey of a few weeks will undeceive him; having obtained the domicile, and the name of his host, or *konag*, for a passport, he will encounter little danger, and meet with a cheerful welcome wherever he goes, travelling through the wilds of Circassia as unconcerned as over the most frequented thoroughfare of Europe (Longworth 1840, 1: 224–25).

Longworth observes the uniqueness of these institutions ("they wholly differ from those which exist in any other part of the world") as being a central warrant for his digression. In a methodological aside, he chides the usual "writers considered as authorities in this country, such as Pallas, Klaproth, or Marigny" for their lack of mention of "these fundamental laws" (ibid.: 225). But then, as he notes, they lacked the direct empirical experience of Circassia that Longworth had had over the course of a year. Even Taitbout de Marigny, who, unlike the others, had actually been to Circassia, had not had sufficient time "to ascertain their existence, and less to comprehend their bearing and operation" (ibid.: 226). It was this lack of empirical encounter that led each of these investigators (virtually all of whom were agents of the Tsar) into their theoretical error of a priori argument, which was, essentially, to identify Circassian nobility with the functions of "government": "The conclusion at which all these writers have arrived, and which anybody labouring under similar disadvantages would come to when informed that there were princes and nobles in the land, is, that the peace and order established there must be owing to their administration" (ibid.).

Such a conclusion would have been more amenable to existing Russian colonial policy than British insurgents, which may be some small part of why Longworth rejected it. But more compelling is his argument that, on one hand, the identification of Circassian princes (*pshee, pshee*) with "government" is mistaken, for "the authority of the Pshees, or princes, is either for good or evil actually null," and, on the other, where this order (still) has powers implied by the name, it "is rather, . . . when uncontrolled by crown or crosier, an element of turbulence than security" (ibid.: 226).

Princely Economies: Pillage

Longworth and Bell both noted in a number of places that the princely economy, at least in their "palmier" days, was an economy based to a large extent on pillage and its redistribution amongst the retainers that made this pillage possible, as well as the manipulation of blood feud systems to produce pretexts for pillage of non-princes. In fact, the "national oath," along with the leveling of distinctions of blood-price between princes and

non-princes, were among the many reforms that Longworth and Bell observed aimed at curtailing this behavior, which itself appeared to have developed recently as a consequence of long-distance trade. These were so-called "market-based feuds," which have their origin in the distorting effects of economic practices on feuding institutions (Otterbein 2000):

Commerce was controlled and organized by the nobility, run by the intermediation of commercial buyers who were strangers (Turks or Tatars) installed on the coast of the Black Sea. The nobles imported manufactured goods, weapons, prestige objects, which they redistributed to their 'vassals.' ... But the 'commercial balance' of the Circassian princes would have remained in the deficit ... If they had not had another source of revenues, namely pillage. The aristocracy devoted themselves to this nearly half of the year, from spring to the end of summer, procuring thus regularly weapons, horses, slaves. This surplus allowed them to engage in exportation, especially of horses and slaves, also to entertain their vassals, an indispensable mechanism for maintaining the social structure. This complex and diversified cycle of exchanges combining agricultural production, commerce and pillage has exercised considerable influence on the Circassian vendetta, provoking distortions, 'anomalies,' ... distortions accentuated by the very nature of political and juridical power, left to the discretion of the aristocracy (Charachidze 1980: 89).

Princely Commerce: The Slave Trade

A particularly important "distorting" effect on Circassian blood feud was the princely monopoly on foreign trade, particularly the trafficking of harem slaves to the Ottoman empire. This trade was particularly valuable to both sides, since Circassia was the last major source of harem slaves for the Ottoman Empire, and harem slaves were structurally central to its elite politics (Toledano 1998: 31). In volume, the trade in Circassian harem slaves was dwarfed by trade in African slaves, being about one to two thousand slaves per year out of a total of some eleven to thirteen thousand slaves per year in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Yet the Circassian slave trade was worth almost as much as the African trade, at £70,000–140,000 and £160,000–200,000 annually, respectively. This was because Circassian slaves, depending on their ultimate function, commanded average prices anywhere from one and a half to ten times the price of African slaves, and sometimes much more (Toledano 1982: 64–67). Given the much smaller volume of slaves and shorter transport distances, the Circassian trade in "prestige" slaves accounted for a major impetus for the transition to "market-based" feuding amongst coastal Circassian princes. In particular, the economy of slavery, pillage, and redistribution enabled the proliferation of princely retainers, considerably augmenting the prince's ability to continue pillaging. Therefore, the princes and their retainers were not agents of order but disorder:

The will of the Pshee is a law to his followers; they do his bidding, whatever it may be; wherever he presents his rifle, a hundred are presented in the same direction; and the booty he collects in his wars is the reward of their fidelity .... Their object certainly

appears to have been anything but the introduction of order and tranquility where they came; and it would have been extraordinary indeed if rapacity and insolence had produced such fruits. To them, rather, the Caucasus owes its bad name; the prisoners in their wars have established a servile class in the country; and the slaves, whose beauty, in ancient and modern times, brought so high a price at Constantinople, have been at once the provocatives and the victims to their depredations (Longworth 1840, 1: 227).

Circassians seem to have identified Bell's and Longworth's proposal for "government" with this princely economy of redistribution, in effect, as a proposal that they should become princes themselves and so take on retainers: "But what use, it was asked, was a government, unless to make presents?" (ibid.: 108).

Princes and Market-Based Feuds

The market-based feuding system not only proliferated the power of the princes, but it also distorted the system of vendetta. Hence, the major indigenous cause of social reform in Circassia had to do with disputes over blood price by caste. The Circassian caste system consisted of four castes, and caste endogamy was the rule. The first caste was the hereditary caste of "princes" (as well as an even more elevated caste of khans), spelt variously *pshi*, *pshee*, or *pshe*. The second was the non-hereditary caste of noble retainers dependent on the *pshi*, the *vork*. Together these were referred to by the Turkish appellation *ouzden* (lord), or *bey*. Alongside these was an independent caste of yeomanry comprising the bulk of the population, called in Turkish *tokav/tocav*, or in Circassian *thfokotl*. Lastly, there was the class of slaves or serfs attached to the princes, *pshitl* or *pshilt* (the term appears to mean "prince's man").

The primary political privileges dividing the first three castes and regulating inter-caste political interactions were their relative blood prices in the blood feud system: one hundred heads for a prince, fifty for a noble, and twenty to twenty-five for a free man, where each "head" (*shxa*) represents sixty to eighty cows (Charachidze 1980: 90):

The price of blood was formerly calculated, according to ancient usage, at so many 'heads': a slave, a good horse, a good shirt of mail, a good bow, sixty sheep, and so forth, being each accounted 'a head.' A hundred of these 'heads' formed the price of blood of a pshe, or prince (that of the descendent of a sultan was indefinite); thirty that of a vork, or noble; twenty that of a thfokotl, or freeman; and fifteen that of a pshilt, or serf. Subsequently the freemen raised the price of their blood to twenty-eight 'heads'; and then at the suggestion of Hassan pasha (as I have formerly said) the prices of the blood of the first three classes were equalised and fixed at two hundred oxen, which are considered to amount in value to about as much as the thirty 'heads' which previously formed the price of blood of a noble (Bell 1840, 2: 241).

A similar system of valuation using "heads" was in operation for bride price: "fifty to sixty for the bride of a prince, thirty for that of a noble, and twenty-five for that of a freeman" (Bell 1840, 2: 242). But this fixity of the number of heads gives an illusory sense of commensurability, for these heads also varied

qualitatively in value of their composition, there being different proportions of "heads" of different values for each grade. In effect, the value of individual heads varied by the same geometric progression as the valuation of lives in terms of heads: If one paid one hundred heads for a prince and twenty for a commoner, it was also the case that the value of an individual head for a prince was sixty to eighty oxen, but only eight for a commoner (ibid.: 242). It was precisely this "double difference" in valuation, where blood price differs between castes not only quantitatively in a fixed geometric ratio of units but in the often capriciously arbitrary qualitative value of these selfsame units, combined with the vastly superior concentrations of potentiality for violence made possible by princely patronage networks, that turned the blood feud system into a "market-based feud" system in which, realistically, no compensation or victory was possible against the *pshi*. The only possible outcome of a feud with the princely caste was the annihilation and enslavement of the opposing group (Charachidze 1980: 90).

Princely privileges in blood prices such as these were the main target of the indigenous leveling reforms witnessed by Longworth and Bell. Such reforms, as elsewhere in the Caucasus, seem to have stemmed from the leveling effects of Islam and of inexpensive gunpowder weapons that increasingly made the expensive heavy armor of the *pshi* irrelevant (Derluguian 2007: 79–84), as well as from the negative effects of Russian policies of co-opting local nobility.

A particular contention within the reforms was not so much the blood prices of princes as opposed to commoners, but more the differences between retainers, or *vork*, and freemen. The *vork* represented a grade of distinction within the retainers of a specific prince. The status was not hereditary, unlike that of *pshi*, and the *vork* were commoners by birth, promoted by the *pshi* in a simple ritual (Bell 1840, 1: 270). This class of non-hereditary retainer-nobility were the foundation of princely power, both enhancing their real power and, given that they were likely to be killed in the prosecution of princely service, their increased valuation in blood price, thereby adding a further advantage to the princes. In essence, every aspect of the feuding system worked to the benefit of the princely caste (Charachidze 1980: 90).

Usages of Courtesy

From the accounts of Bell and Longworth, it is clear that outside of the blood feud system, too, relations between the *pshi* and commoners were ambiguous and contested. The commoners never were serfs (as the Russian spy Klaproth apparently believed, following a broader practice of translating directly Circassian caste distinctions into the seigniorial system of the Russian empire). Rather, other than the blood feud valuation system, most of the differences between the castes resided in "certain usages of courtesy" (Bell 1840, 1: 408). One of these usages, important for what follows, was that precedence of seating in assembly followed rank order: "The descendents of Khans seat

themselves on the ground first, then the Pshes, then the Vorks, and lastly the Thfokotls. Those of inferior rank always remain standing until all their superiors have set them the example of being seated" (ibid.: 409). Longworth echoes this assessment:

But in the three provinces of Katukoitch, Shapsook, and the Abbassaks, as I have already intimated, there had been for some years past a tendency, introduced, I believe, by Mahomedanism, to level all such distinctions; and the only rights, as far as I could discover, to which persons of this class could lay claim at present are, precedence in fighting or feasting, being equally allowed the foremost place at table or in the battle field. To these prerogatives they add another, equally distinguished, that of sitting down first, and graciously permitting others to be seated after them (1840, 1: 125–26).

The *pshis*, then, so far from being an explanation for the peace and security that prevailed, had to be contained, yet without "crown or crosier" intervening. Where Russian colonial policy would have seen the *pshi* caste or its equivalents throughout the Caucasus as potential instrumentalities for indirect rule, a service-nobility in the making, Longworth saw in the *pshi* an element extrinsic and inimical to the indigenous Circassian social order. And, consonant with his own Liberal attachments, he saw the "true" Circassian in the Circassian yeomanry. If, then, the local aristocrats were not to serve as the basis for indigenous "government," what other options existed?

CIRCASSIAN "SOCIETY": THE TRIBES (*TOKUMS*) OF CIRCASSIA

The rapacity of the princes and their violent military economy of plunder and redistribution reminded Longworth of the history of the feudal aristocracy of his own land. By contrast, in the Circassian "tribes" or "societies" (Turkish *tokum*, what Bell called "fraternities"; Bell says the Circassian term is *tleush*) Longworth saw a kind of "mutual aid" organization that could serve as a foil for the princes and a basis for government. These "societies" were extraterritorial kinship organizations that stood in opposition to the local territorial/geographical groupings (*memlekhet*, "the country," "districts," or "streams") that were the corporate groups in which Circassians engaged in warfare and in council. The nobles did not lead these organizations, but rather nobles and commoners had parallel societies, often with a vague "alliance" between them (Longworth 1840, 1: 233–34).

The societies, then, as opposed to the power of the princes and nobles, which was "of a military and feudal origin," and to the territorial organization of the *memlekhet*, similarly formed "for warlike or national purposes" (ibid.: 238), were "formed ... not for warlike or political, but for social and judicial purposes" (ibid.: 233). Longworth believed he had discovered society as such amongst the various political institutions of the Circassians, that is, a form of organization that was not executive or military, but deliberative. This allowed these "societies" to play a crucial role in Longworth's apologetics.

On the one hand, they were "society," that is, "social and judicial," but were not "military." On the other, they were not "feudal" in origin, but were, one might almost say, "civil," since they organized all castes, not just the nobles. Continuing in the framework of the same Lockean argument with which he began his account of Circassian institutions, Longworth more or less identified these organizations with those functions Locke associates with the transition from the state of nature to civil or political society (the socialization of the executive function, juridical and legal institutions). In so doing, he insisted that these seeming kinship groups were only fictive kinship groups united by status, and that their real bonds were quintessentially Liberal ties of contract. At the same time, Locke's argument separated logically the formation of civil society (the deliberative function) from the formation of political society (delegation of the executive function, that is, socialized violence), making the former logically prior to the latter even if they seemed to be historically coincident. But Longworth has discovered society without government; he has discovered "stateless society" (like Evans-Pritchard's (1940) formulation of the Nuer as an "acephalous kinship state").

Therefore, the historical role of these societies is precisely the role played by the triumphant bourgeoisie in checking the power of aristocracy in Europe. Longworth's argument is based on a functional identity of Circassian societies and the institutions of civil society founded by European bourgeoisies, the main difference being the absence of cities, towns, or locality in general, in Circassian versions: "As in Europe, under the feudal system, men of peaceful disposition and pursuits were incorporated into burghs, and townships, with a view to their common safety, so too the mountaineers, against the violence of military chiefs, have sought defense in voluntary organizations; different, it is true, but as effective, and more adapted to their mode of life and the genius of the country; associations which do not withdraw them from their fields and pastures to immure them within the walls of a city, or even confine them to a particular locality. . ." (1840, 1: 229).

Longworth is so keen on seeing the tribes as quasi-bourgeois forms of organization identifiable with Lockean "society" that he insists on their being entirely voluntary: their kinship idiom of "brotherhood" and rules of exogamy is for Longworth merely a contractual fiction (in striking contrast to the politically constitutive role of kinship in functionalism [McKinnon 2000]): "[The] sole bound of union [of these societies] is an oath, imposing, in the absence of all other ties, obligations of a most sacred character. The members of these communities all regard each other as brothers, and, to strengthen the illusion of their being such, their families are not allowed to intermarry; a regulation so rigidly observed, that even where the society is composed of many thousands, as in the case of the powerful one of Natquo, it still holds good, and a marriage between two individuals of it is looked upon as incestuous" (1840, 1: 229).

We can see in his assessment of the central importance of the oath in the creation of these societies the germs of seeing in the institution of the oath itself the

only possible source for Circassian reforms. Moreover, to continue the perva-sive "bourgeois" feel of these societies as Longworth presented them, they can be regarded as a native form of "joint stock society" with "liberal ideas of prop-erty" (ibid.: 234), in this case the stock referring to wives of deceased members, who constituted part of the "joint stock" property (however illiberal the idea of property in women might otherwise have seemed, for example, in British Liberal views of the Ottoman slave trade [Toledano 1982; 1998]). The societies were particularly involved in matters of the prosecution as well as adjudication of feuds, in which fines to be paid to the offended party were levied by "sub-scription" across the whole society, and the offender was relegated to his own society for punishment (Longworth 1840, 1: 230–33, 240): "Every man feels that for the payment or exaction of fines the resources of the society are his own, and in proportion to these is he respected by his neighbours. Nor is this all; agreeably with the liberal ideas which prevail here generally with respect to property, and which know hardly of any bounds among the members of a society; a man has a claim upon it for anything he may stand in need of. For example, if in want of a wife, and too poor to buy one, for they are very expens-ive articles, his society raises a subscription for him" (ibid.: 234).

These institutions distributed risk across their membership in a manner parallel to joint stock companies, and, Longworth felt, were in every way beneficial to producing a sense of "social responsibility" (ibid.: 240):

In the commission of a crime, every individual is aware that it is not only against the party immediately injured he offends, but against his own society, who are all involved in its consequences, and to whom he alone is answerable for it. Revenge, on the other hand, is disarmed by the reflection that it deprives a whole society of its claim to indem-nity, the exaction of which will more effectively answer its purpose, by drawing on the head of the enemy the displeasure of all his tribe. The principle here is the same as in the jurisprudence of civilized states, which makes every man responsible for his crimes to society at large; but it must be more effective when, instead of being a stranger to him, every member of that society is a brother, whose interests are immediately compromised by his offense (ibid.: 231).

Having discovered a kernel of Liberalism within the order of Circassian insti-tutions, Longworth returns again to the utility of these indigenous institutions with respect to the broader program of building a Circassian "government." If not the warlike princes, where can be found a Circassian basis for government? The two options seem to be, either these "societies," or the territorial organiz-ation of the councils of the *memlekhet* (discussed below). Longworth is ambivalent. The societies seem to offer resistance to the very idea of a unified government: "The establishment . . . of a supreme power would be com-pletely incompatible with their institutions; and when the Circassians talk of it themselves, they have not the least notion that it would interfere with them . . . . And yet to establish the advantages of a military and political organization they must submit to a government, and this would on the outset come into collision

with the societies, as they would naturally object to transfer the control and punishment of their members to others, wherever they might be" (ibid.: 236).

At the same time, the societies seem to provide a homology to some of its functions, including both internal revenue and statistics: "Could this difficulty be got over with, the societies, or rather the ruins of them, would present good materials for the construction of a government. They are already in the habit of collecting property, and of equally distributing burdens for the payment of fines, and there is little doubt that the same machinery would serve for the collection of a revenue; while the statistical information possessed by every society as to its own body might also be profitably turned to account" (ibid.).

And this, finally, brings us to the conclusion of the argument that Longworth began with, namely, what explained the security of life and property in Circassia. The answer, more or less, being the "society" (specifically juridical institutions) represented by these "societies," and not the "government" of the princes, as other authors supposed. True, Circassia itself lacked a single unifying government; rather, it consisted of "many independent communities, commingling, yet preserving each its identity for the sake of mutual protection" (ibid.: 239). At the same time, Longworth praised these institutions of the Circassians for their educative quality, and the autonomy they lent the individual, which did not make the Circassian a passive client of government but rather an active participant: "There can be no doubt, in the meanwhile, that these mixed relations of society lead to a development, moral and intellectual, in the people at large, vastly superior to that which is obtained by modern civilization" (ibid.). The Circassians lacked a single unifying government, but this did not mean that they lacked many of the civil advantages of having one (defined as security of property and life), as well as all the individual "pride and independence" of an armed autonomous population, that was nevertheless subject to the "tranquilizing effect superinduced by . . . social responsibility," producing a demeanor "sober and dignified" (ibid.: 240): "To conclude with the observations I started with; the result of these apparently conflicting elements of the social system is a harmony by no means contemptible . . . in no country of the world . . . can a stranger, after identifying himself with one of its tribes,—a privilege he obtains by becoming a guest of a member of it, who is answerable for him to the rest,—travel with greater security" (ibid.).

VIRTUAL REPRESENTATION: CIRCASSIAN COUNCILS

It was in his discussion of the working of Circassian councils that Longworth confronted the greatest difficulty in his project of translation. For Circassian councils lacked all of the properties of a parliamentary system, there was no vote and no representation, and, indeed, no delegated bodies to which the execution of its decisions could be entrusted. How then did they produce their authority? How, in fact, did they work? Why did they exist at all if they did not amount to "government"? In resolving the matter, Longworth hit

CIRCASSIAN CHIEFS.
Published by Henry Colburn, Gt Marlborough St 1840.

upon the interesting solution of deciding that they did indeed have a system of representation, a system of "virtual," rather than "actual" representation, here defined by its leading English exponent, the conservative writer Burke: "Virtual representation is that in which there is a community of interests, and a sympathy of feelings and desires, between those who act in the name of any description of the people, and the people in whose name they act, though the trustees are not actually chosen by them. This is virtual representation. Such a representation I think to be, in many cases, even better than the actual" (1797, 4: 293).

By these means Longworth made an attenuated connection between the existing system (or at least highly conservative and basically anti-democratic theory) of parliamentary representation in England and the Circassian system of non-representation. To understand how he came to find a form of representation in a political system that seems to have completely lacked such a thing, and managed indeed to find an analog of a very conservative theory of democratic representation (which amounts to no *actual* representation at all in the ordinary sense) amongst a people who he in other respects considered to be more radical than the most radical English chartist, we must first understand how he described the basic form and dynamic of the *medjilis* or council.

As Longworth explained, Circassian forms of polity could be characterized in terms of the principled reasons for certain institutional absences. Circassian concepts of personal autonomy negated any possibility of representative forms

of democracy, or indeed, any notion of formal delegation or representation itself (Longworth 1840, 1: 102–5; cf. Caton 1987). A direct consequence of this sense of autonomy was that at the same time any concept of voting in such a council was absolutely meaningless. Therefore the Circassian council form was more radical in its "reforms" than English radicalism: "Let our radicals, who call so vehemently for universal suffrage, as the *ne plus ultra* of free institutions, remember that in the career of reform there is a step even beyond that—no suffrage at all" (1840, 1: 103). Since liberal reformism presents itself under the sign of naturalism, progress towards freedom works in effect, backwards, and the primitive Circassians appear as the culmination of a historical progression away from feudal artifice and towards nature (Metcalf 1995: 29).

A further result is that Circassian councils, as opposed to both participatory and representative democracies, could never come to the fundamentally agonistic position of a vote (unlike Athenian democracy and English Parliament): "Day after day will they resume their deliberations, while persons, whose opinions they respect, will speak for hours together; but what, no doubt, tends to prolong their sittings is, the necessity of their being unanimous—a majority on a question will not suffice to decide it; unless all are agreed, they separate without coming to any decision at all, since none will be swayed by opinions he disapproves of" (Longworth 1840, 1: 125).

A further consequence of this sense of absolute personal autonomy is that there can be no "state secrets"; everything must be publicized: "However inconvenient the practice may appear, they allow of no secrets in the administrations of their affairs; nobody has any right to be wiser in regard to them than his neighbours" (ibid.: 123–24). By the same logic, the members of the council addressed the Englishmen in Circassian (necessitating a translator), rather than resorting to Turkish, which might exclude some of the participants of the council (ibid.: 116–17).

Lastly, participation in the councils was in principle open to all males: "Everyone ... has the right, if he chooses, of addressing the assembly, but it is a privilege which few avail themselves of" (ibid.: 124). The right to speak was freely available to all, though in practice limited to authoritative speakers, elders over forty years (*tamatas*), religious authorities (*effendis*) and nobility (*pshis*). In effect, those persons who embodied what Habermas calls in a European context "representative publicness" (1991: 7–9) were those best able to "virtually represent" the social totality. The youth (*dely kanns*) instead engaged in a parallel set of semi-agonistic activities alongside the councils, the well-known horsemanry (*djigit*) of the Caucasus, or equivalently, they stood in wait for the enemies (Longworth 1840, 1: 102). The formal right to speak, as Longworth explained, did not include the right to command an audience: those speaking without such authority were not punished in a manner akin to the *demos* in the figure of Thersites speaking out of turn before the

princes in the Homeric council scene, that is, being clubbed into silence by the very symbol of authority, the *skeptron*, that symbolized incumbency into the speaking role. Rather, the right to speak was met by an equal and opposite right to ignore a speaker, all with perfect decorum:

It rarely happens that any under the age of forty ever interfere in these debates; and only with a tolerable sprinkling of grey hairs in the beard, announcing the matured wisdom of the tamatas, or elders, can the orator command attention. Should there be any individual fonder than others of hearing himself talk, they have a way of silencing him peculiar to themselves; they neither crow like cocks, nor bray like certain other animals in more civilized assemblies, but adopt a method for which the form and the roomy nature of their house of meeting, al fresco, are most peculiarly adapted. The unfortunate orator in such cases is apt to find himself with no other audience than the neighboring trees and bushes, the circle he had been addressing having rapidly dissolved and re-adjusted itself out of earshot, where it might be seen listening to somebody with better claims on its attention (ibid.: 124–25).

Therefore, the council had to construct unanimity without either physical force or coercive, agonistic forms of argument. Instead, the very forms of persuasion of the council relied both on the authoritative status of the speaker and the style in which the arguments were delivered. As far as style is concerned, council meetings were divided into two rough periods: In the initial period, by far the longest, individual speakers made their separate arguments. Here the accent was on persuasiveness (compare Caton 1987; see also Asad 1973), muted rather than agonistic linguistic forms of argument: "Tumult or violence are steadily discountenanced, and the phrase they employ for eloquence, *tatlu dil*—literally, 'sweet tongue'—marks their preference for the persuasive to the wrangling style" (Longworth 1840, 1: 124). This was the greater part of the council, involving the muted subjectivity of conciliatory persuasiveness. The following period, after a set of unanimous propositions had been subscribed to with unanimity, involved a literal re-presentation of this unanimity of voice to the council, in a very different style, an attempt in effect to re-contextualize this discourse "as if" it came as a message from elsewhere, delivered by a mounted "messenger" who harangued them in stentorian voice and laconic language. By these means, in effect, they command themselves to do as they themselves have said, just as they themselves reiterate their unanimous assent by shouted *amins*.

The medjilis met for the last time, and, as is customary at the close of the proceedings, were addressed by a mounted warrior, who rode into the midst of the assembly, and proclaimed with a loud voice the resolutions which it had unanimously come to. He then exhorted everybody present to assist, by countenance and example, in carrying them into effect. (The orator on these occasions is not expected to use *tatlu dil*; his language should be blunt and laconic.) During the delivery of this pithy harangue, the whole assembly, at every pause made by the orator, responded, 'Amin! Amin!' (ibid.: 163–65).

By these means, the individual positions presented in the persuasive discourse of *tatlu dil* were transformed into the positions of the assembled totality and delivered as a set of laconic commands. By these means, they commanded themselves.

The second aspect of this production of unanimity was the category of authority itself and the form of "virtual representation" that lay behind it:

The attendance on this occasion [of the grand council of *medjilis*], without being thronged ... comprised the great proportion of rank, property and intelligence of the two provinces of Shapsook and Natukvitch,—the Tamatas, Effendis, and the Ouzdens—that is, the elders, judges and nobles. In short, the assembly was of a character imposing enough to confer an undeniable stamp of authority to all its proceedings. It forms, indeed, in such councils, the chief, if not only point of importance, that they should all feel convinced that they are from character and numbers so constituted as to convey an unequivocal expression of the popular will, for to none other will they submit (ibid.: 102).

As with the use of a mounted "messenger" to command them to do what they themselves had already decided, here too they were projecting an image of authority, but also an image that they, in essence, were united as a whole. Longworth was still beholden to some concept of a divide between the popular will and its representatives, even though such a divide was in essence absent. Persons present at the council represented themselves; in effect, they submitted to the popular will only because it was their own will. However, this construction of a kind of "stamp of authority" by virtue of the "character and numbers" (equivalently "numbers and respectability" [ibid.: 105]) of the council was crucial to Longworth's notion of "virtual representation." The authoritativeness of the speakers, based on the wisdom of age (*tamatas*), religious (*effendis*) or secular authority (*pshis*), as well as a good measure of *tatlu dil*, was what lent them their ability to act as "virtual representatives" of the "popular will." This in spite of the fact that the very idea of representation and delegation was repugnant to Circassian notions of autonomy:

For the attainment of this object, it may be thought, a regular representative system would be best calculated; they prefer, however, the confusion and uncertainty which must prevail under their present mode of proceeding, to the betrayal of their interests which might result from the former. So jealous, indeed, is this sovereign people of their power, that no individual will trust his share of it out of his own hands, or even formally delegate it to any particular or any given number of representatives for a moment . . . . Yet, for all this sturdy independence, there can be no doubt of their being virtually represented. Age, experience, prowess, and eloquence, have all their due weight and influence, and, in adapting themselves, and assuming the garb most flattering to the prejudices of the people, render their possessors the decided organs of its opinions (ibid.: 102–3).

Virtual representation, in effect, is virtual representation without the element of delegation of power, as he clarifies himself when he speaks of a "delegation" from Abbassak, and then corrects himself: "Deputation I have called it, though that is hardly a proper designation for a body of individuals who, though virtually representing, as I have before explained, the part of the country from which they came, had not been formally delegated" (ibid.: 150–51).

A portion of the virtual quality simply arose from this, that the speakers were not chosen by anyone to represent the whole. The other aspect of Longworth's

theory lies in the idea that parliamentary members did not directly represent the interests of their electors or their district (as an agent legally represents a principal). Rather, parliament was so composed that it as a whole represented the entirety of the realm, partially by the very authoritativeness and freedom of its representatives that they were not beholden to represent the partial and local interests of their districts. Virtual representation stands to direct representation, as a kind of Conservative holistic theory of representation involving community of interests to a kind of Liberal theory of the whole as consisting of additive sums of partial interests. This is partially because Longworth was very interested in the idea of finding a body that might, in some sense, be able to represent Circassia as a whole, with which he and the British government might treat. In the absence of an actual system of representation, he hit upon the idea of a kind of modified virtual representation. His theory includes the idea that direct participation without such virtual representation might have been typical of councils that treated local matters (the territorial organization, *memlekhet*), but that with the arrival of the war with the Russians and the more extensive combinations of a segmentary logic the councils entailed, they had taken on a more virtual character, over a wider area:

Originally this influence, like the councils in which it predominated, was in great measure confined to a particular district or tribe; but as the pressure from without, arising from Russian ambition, gave birth to more extensive combination, and to national interest, with councils on a greater scale for their direction, that influence, in seeking a wider sphere, naturally derived from the place or tribe where it was founded a representative character. Not that any freeman in the country abandoned his right of attending those councils personally, and influencing, as far as he was able, their decisions; but that, from the inconvenience which might result from their neglect of their domestic affairs, or the assemblage of so vast a multitude of councillors on one spot, they were generally satisfied with the attendance, though not expressly sent by them, of the persons in whom they had the most confidence (ibid.: 103–4).

From this "segmentary" logic, by which the presence of an external threat unified the various local forms of organization, emerged the closest analog of a national parliament. From this increasingly unified council, it followed that the nature of participation would be increasingly attenuated, while never actually involving direct representation or delegation. That is, precisely because these quasi-representatives were chosen by no one, they could not be "direct or actual representatives." But because not everyone could attend in their own right, the fact that non-attending Circassians could be said to be "satisfied," there is said to be "virtual representation." Also, because virtual representation is a notion of the representation of wholes (Britain) by a whole (Parliament), as opposed to direct representation, which involves the representation of partial and local interests (which act as principals) by parliamentary representatives (which act as agents), a mapping of the part to the part, the whole of Britain is represented as an aggregated sum of conflicting parts. Here, the level of combination implies that the largest *medjilis* had achieved

"virtual representation" of the warlike portions of Circassia, and this without ever so much as having a concept of representation in the first place.

The indigenous improving reforms, especially the national oath, stood at the intersection of the aforesaid orders of organization. For these reforms were designed to curtail, in the face of the Russian advance, the economy of pillage and feud that characterized princely distinction and for which the societies had emerged as mutual aid organizations. At the same time, they were propagated by the same councils discussed above.

For Longworth, as for Urquhart before him, these reforms represented a natural development of Circassian respect for oaths (King 2007). Just as Longworth reconstructed the fictive kinship of the Circassian *tokum/tleush* so that it could be understood as being Society in the Lockean sense, that is, jural communities organized by oath, Liberal relations of contract and not feudal relations of status, so too he eliminated any other form of political tie from among them but this self-same oath:

To explain the full power of the oath over the Circassians, which will, doubtless, appear marvellous to such as are strangers to their customs, I cannot do better than adopt their own definition or personification of it, there being about as much truth in the metaphors they employ as in any I have ever heard. Nothing, indeed, could more widely differ than the tone of affected regret, but real exultation, with which they acknowledged there was neither king nor government in the country, than the emphatic sincerity of that with which they have as often assured us that their king was their oath. It is, in fact, the monarch—the only one—whose sway (morally and metaphorically speaking) had been submitted to, from time immemorial, in every part of the Caucasus. His seal it is that confers validity on every compact, social or political. He is the mighty arbiter in all differences—the sole lawgiver, whose authority enforced what his sanction has confirmed. All, of whatever sex or condition, are his vassals (1840, 2: 249).

Once again, the principle of contract (the oath) by which they had "society" was also the only principle mediating political relations. Not even the apparent coercion of oaths from time to time disturbed Longworth's appraisal of the oath as being the central institution constituting Circassian social and political orders. Longworth's view stood in rhetorical counterpoint to the Russian view of Circassians, "invariably representing them as lawless hordes of barbarians" (ibid.: 248): "Nothing, however, could be more unfair than such statements; for though it must be admitted that the laws and institutes acknowledged by these mountaineers did not formerly interdict acts of spoliation between members of different tribes and provinces, yet the observances which they did prescribe, and which certainly sufficed for the general security of life and property, were perhaps more tenaciously adhered to than the laws are in any other country" (ibid.: 248).

Unlike other projects of reform planned or projected by Messrs. Longworth and Bell, the kernel of the national oath appears, then, to have arisen from

existing Circassian political tendencies. According to Longworth, the first form of the reform in question came with Islam, whose proselytizers sought to eliminate practices such as mutual pillage and feud, and used an early form of the national oath, having "invested the majesty of the oath with the more solemn insignia of the Koran" (ibid.: 250). There was, however, a general reluctance to accept the oath at this time, since the civil institutions of the Circassians require the very forms of violence being renounced as sanctions: "To renounce practices such as rapine and violence, the only means, as I have elsewhere explained, by which, in default of others, the tribes could obtain mutual redress, and which inferred, per se, no degree of moral turpitude, was a sacrifice few could be induced to subscribe to" (ibid.: 250–51).

In order to promulgate the oath amongst recalcitrant Circassians, these early reformers resorted to indigenous forms of authority, both the authority of "virtual representation" in councils discussed above, as well as occasionally non-lethal forms of coercion (compare King 2007):

The means adopted to enforce it were in accordance with the primitive manners of the nation. A number of influential chiefs or elders, forming themselves into a body, would proceed on horseback, with a cadi or magistrate at their head, to the various streams and hamlets, and having summoned a council at each of these places, endeavour to prevail on their inhabitants to take the oath. Occasionally, when they could not be persuaded by fair means, rougher arguments were resorted to, and the disputants would take to cudgelling one another. But this sort of altercation was seldom attended with fatal results; and to characterize it more fully as a strife among brethren, it was humorously called by them 'the war of the whips' (1840, 2: 251–52).

While these early efforts had indifferent results, with the arrival of David Urquhart in Circassia in 1834 during the Russian invasion the project was revived, particularly because Urquhart made it clear to the Circassians that renunciation of the feud was a condition for any support from England (King 2007). Additionally, commerce with the Russians was interdicted in the new form of the oath (Longworth 1840, 2: 253). Given that the princely caste had been compromised in general by acting as hosts to Russian spies, trading with and sometimes even defecting to the Russians, the content of the national oath restricting intra-Circassian pillage and trade with the Russians, like the internal measures of reform directed to the differences in blood price between castes of Circassians, must be seen as part of a general leveling tendency, a muted caste war, aimed as much at the *pshis* as the Russian invaders. Under these conditions, according to Longworth, the project of the national oath took on a new vigor, and its beneficial effects as well (see King 2007: 250–51): "The effect of the oath, and the contrast afforded, during the last few years, between the sworn and unsworn districts, was almost miraculous, the former being as remarkable for the unanimity and good order which prevailed in them, as the latter were for misrule, and reckless communication with the Russians, through the neutral province of Zadoog" (Longworth 1840, 2: 254).

It was this palpable difference then, that caused Longworth to retrospectively realize that his and Bell's attempts represent themselves as "ambassadors" in search of an indigenous form of "government" constituted "trivial objects" when compared to the reforms already ongoing within Circassian society itself: a project of leveling, indeed "Liberal," reforms, the national oath, eventuated both by Russian invasion and internal caste war. Understanding the principled reasons for the success of the national oath and the failure of their own attempts to create government did not only transform Longworth's vision of the Circassian polity. It also changed his perception of his own agency as participant, from being an ambassador or representative from a state (which neither he nor Bell were, in fact) to being "a witness from the civilized world," before whom one might solemnly abjure "uncivilized" practices (1840, 1: 186–88), hence rendering the national oath effective.

CONCLUSIONS

I have emphasized the structuring epistemic role played by the interested character of Longworth's engagement with Circassian institutions, the way he learned to understand these institutions not by detached observation, but by pragmatic participation. I began by comparing his account of the political institutions of the Circassians of 1840 to Evans-Pritchard's classic study of the political institutions of the Nuer (1940), arguing that Longworth came to somewhat similar conclusions about Circassians precisely one hundred years earlier. It should be added immediately that this may have had as much to do with the similarity of their political presuppositions, grounded in the durable British romanticization of egalitarian "village communities" (Kuklick 1991; McKinnon 2000), as it had to do with the actual political arrangements and egalitarianism of either Circassians or the Nuer.[4]

It may be that there is no reason to compare Longworth to contemporary and recent professional anthropologists because he was something entirely different. But that arbitrary line between amateur and professional accounts would surely satisfy no one. Longworth had at least as much in common with Evans-Pritchard as with T. E. Lawrence. Unlike Longworth, Evans-Pritchard was in employ of the British Government, but like Longworth, he was using his ethnography in an interested manner to subvert the presuppositions of colonial rulers. Evans-Pritchard's account thus invites comparison not only because of presuppositions he shared with Longworth, including a very similar analysis of "acephalous" political organization (other than the role played by kinship), but also because Evans-Pritchard's engagement with the Nuer in fieldwork (under the auspices of British colonial command) was in interested dialog with a very similar model of political co-optation ("indirect rule") to that

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[4] For critiques of the segmentary model, see also, for example, Asad 1973; Caton 1987; and most recently, Sneath 2007, and literature cited therein.

employed by the Russians in the Caucasus in relation to groups like Circassians, as Kuklick notes (see also Asad 1973):

In some part, Evans-Pritchard's interpretations [downplaying the leadership role of the leopard-skin chief] were strategic, designed to counter the views and objectives of the Sudan Political Service, who were attempting to establish an administrative structure for the recently pacified Nuer. Like other members of his professional generation, he was determined to prevent colonial rulers from subverting indigenous institutions to serve their own ends. Like British colonial officials everywhere, those in Sudan were eager to find in traditional Nuer political institutions an orderly system of leadership which they could employ, and they were disappointed with Evans-Pritchard's findings, however useful they found them (Kuklick 1991: 275).

As Kuklick notes, Evans-Pritchard developed his model of acephalous kinship states (and perhaps, downplayed or erased the hierarchical aspects of Nuer society for the same purposes) in order to persuade the Sudan Political Service of the futility of their efforts to produce indirect rule among the Nuer, just as, one might imagine, Longworth developed his to try to convince his brothers in arms Bell and Nadir Bey of the futility of their projects of building "government." Both, then, sought to challenge the presuppositions of what constituted a typical "tribal" political order, a construct that was itself an enabling presupposition of both Russian and British Colonial policies of elite co-optation and indirect rule. In Longworth's case, the model he constructed was also one that showed why the model of "government" could not be transplanted onto Circassian soil, explaining his initial frustrations and enabling a strategy better adapted to the Circassian political order. To do this, Longworth translated the Circassian political order from a non-coeval status of a tribal "chiefdom" to a coeval language of radical Liberalism. But here too Longworth had much in common with Evans-Pritchard (in spite of the very different political role played by kinship in Evans-Pritchard's theories [McKinnon 2000]), inasmuch as both implicitly addressed their characterizations of the political institutions of Circassians and the Nuer to place them within a broadly shared romanticized model of the Anglo-Saxon village commune common to Liberal discourses throughout the period (Kuklick 1991; Metcalf 1995). Using this egalitarian language of Liberalism allowed these political institutions to seem more familiar, and sympathetic, to broader British publics, revealing, perhaps, the durable shared set of presuppositions that allowed Longworth and Evans-Pritchard to arrive at such similar analyses across such a long distance in time.

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