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Mountains, Steppes and Empires:

Approaches to the North Caucasus in the Early Middle Ages

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SHORT ABSTRACT

People in the valleys and foothills north of the Caucasus mountain range have lived on the edge of empires for over five thousand years, while resisting incorporation into any single empire until recently. This thesis examines interactions between the agrarian empires of the Near East, the nomadic empires of the western Eurasian steppe and the highlanders of the North Caucasus (especially, but not exclusively, the Alans) in the eighth to tenth centuries CE. The North Caucasus was a 'hinterland' of empires, where forms of radical social autonomy could be preserved (James Scott). This made its history distinct from imperial 'peripheries' in the South Caucasus and around the Black Sea coast. It was a zone of contact, where people from different cultures could sometimes find 'Middle Ground' (Richard White), but where patterns of imperial dominance and violence could also cast long shadows (Carolyn Nordstrom).

This thesis approaches the early medieval North Caucasus through writing produced in the Byzantine Empire and the 'Abbāsid caliphate, and through Russian archaeology of the region. The 'Abbāsid historian al-Balādhurī (chapter two) offers a perspective on the legacy of Sasanian imperialism and outlines resources that the 'Abbāsid state could draw on from the region. Burial, settlement and landscape archaeology of the Kislovodsk Basin allow us to see the region from within, where we find a transformation of the region's social structure between the eighth and tenth centuries (chapter three). The exceptional preservation of textiles in North-West Caucasian burial sites (chapter four) reveal how the highlanders were connected to far-flung places, resources and ideas, even while they maintained political autonomy. This remained so after the growth of Christianity in the region in the tenth century, for which Byzantine written sources and the archaeology of the region provide the crucial evidence (chapter five).

LONG ABSTRACT

People in the valleys and foothills north of the Caucasus mountain range have lived on the edge of empires for over five thousand years, while resisting incorporation into any single empire until recently. This thesis examines interactions between the agrarian empires of the Near East, the nomadic empires of the western Eurasian steppe and the highlanders of the North Caucasus (especially, but not exclusively, the Alans) in the eighth to tenth centuries CE. The North Caucasus was a 'hinterland' of empires, where forms of radical social autonomy could be preserved (James Scott). This made its history distinct from imperial 'peripheries' in the South Caucasus and around the Black Sea coast. It was a zone of contact, where people from different cultures could sometimes find 'Middle Ground' (Richard White), but where patterns of imperial dominance and violence could also cast long shadows (Carolyn Nordstrom).

The word 'imperialism' is used to describe power dynamics that emanated from centres that sometimes did and sometimes did not describe themselves as empires. The different ways that the 'official mind' of the elites at the centres of power in Iraq and Constantinople in our period viewed the North Caucasian hinterland reveal differences in the structure of the Byzantine Empire and the 'Abbāsid Caliphate as tributary empires, and reveal their relationship to the imperial legacies of Late Antiquity. Archaeological evidence allows us to see how life on the edge of multiple imperial systems shaped the social organisation of the highlanders of the North Caucasus. The region is conceptualised as a 'hinterland', using the core-periphery-hinterland model of Gills and Frank. The 'hinterland', lying beyond the periphery of empires, can provide resources, including human labour, for the core and the periphery, but maintains a greater degree of social autonomy than the 'near side' of the frontier.

The material on the Caucasus in the *Futūḥ al-buldān* by the 'Abbāsid courtier and administrator al-Balādhurī provides a detailed perspective from one imperial centre (§2.1). Al-Balādhurī had not

visited the region, but he drew his sources from inhabitants of the Muslim centres of the South Caucasus. The text is often used to outline the narrative of the 'Arab-Khazar' wars, but here it will be analysed to show how a central 'Abbāsid administrator understood the place of the North Caucasian hinterland in relation to the South Caucasian periphery and the wider political economy of the 'Abbāsid empire (§2.2). The specific context in which the al-Balādhurī composed his text, as the Caucasus was beginning to slip out of 'Abbāsid control, shaped his interest in the ideological legacies of Sasanian imperialism on the North Caucasian frontier (§2.3) and the fiscal significance of investment in, and revenue collection from, the region. The text reveals his reservations about open-ended expansionism (§2.4), as well as details about private landholding (§2.5), the gathering of slaves from the highlands (§2.5) and the relationship between the 'Abbāsid state and the Khazar pastoral economy (§2.6).

While al-Balādhurī provides a view from the outside, the archaeology of the Kislovodsk Basin provides a view from within North Caucasus. This region lay beyond the reach of Sasanian, Roman or 'Abbāsid power, but was more vulnerable to demands for tribute from the nomadic powers to the north (§3.1). Ecologically-informed traditions within Russian scholarship provide useful tools for analysis (§3.2), but a tendency to invoke mass migration as the dominant explanation for cultural change is challenged (§3.4). The evidence of cemeteries (§3.5), settlements (§3.6) and patterns of agricultural development (§3.7) is analysed. From the fifth until the eighth centuries, elite groups controlled a small number of key fortresses in the Kislovodsk Basin, and reflected their elite status through the burial rites at a special plot within one cemetery in particular. These drew on the material culture of the nomadic peoples of the steppes to the north, but simultaneously emphasised a local elite identity. This was not a landscape of aristocrats and dependent peasants: the basin was covered in small hill-forts, with associated agricultural plots, often at quite high altitudes. These appear to have been occupied by farmers determined to maintain their independence from local elites ('escape agriculture'). Major disruptions in the eighth and ninth centuries, possibly connected with the establishment of Khazar hegemony,

brought this social situation to an end. By the tenth century, a much more nucleated form of social organisation, involving greater degrees of direct control over human labour, had emerged.

Chapter four turns to evidence for connections between the small worlds of the North-West Caucasus and wider imperial systems and circuits of accumulation. The exceptional preservation of silk and other textiles in a series of seventh- to tenth-century burial sites in the North-West Caucasus, in particular at Moshchevaia Balka, Nizhnyi Arkhyz and Khasaut (§4.2), permits investigation of the means by which resources and crafted goods from distant societies, from the Mediterranean to China, could be put to local uses in the mountain valleys of the region. Silk could function abstractly as money or quasi-money (as stores of value, media of exchange and units of account), but its use as adornment for the living and the dead expressed concrete ideas about social identity and specific social relationships, between members of the same community, or between people from very different geographical and social locations (§4.3). The chapter argues that the distinction between the abstract and concrete properties of the silk was not between different parts of the system of circulation (§4.4), but a contradiction that faced those at both imperial centres and in the hinterland, tied up with the visibility or invisibility of the sources of social power (§4.5). Displays of wealth from distant locations, or the sending of wealth to distant locations, could reinforce claims to legitimacy, but they could also provoke suspicion about shadow economies, whether at the level of official corruption, smuggling or localised hustling.

Chapter five considers the effects of Byzantine imperialism on the North-West Caucasus in the ninth and tenth centuries. Byzantine missionary activity in the region led to the conversion of the Alan ruler and the establishment of a series of Byzantine-style churches in the early tenth century, and the emergence of new settlements and forms of agricultural exploitation to support them (§5.1, 4, 8, 10). As in chapter two, we use our sources produced in the centre to ask what resources imperial elites hoped to draw from the North Caucasian hinterland, and what ends they

believed were served by directing resources towards it (§5.6, 9). In chapter five, we approach this from the perspective of both sides of the 'imperial-ecclesiastical' complex. A refined dating of lists of bishops produced by the patriarchate, and of the letters of Nicholas Mystikos (table 5.1), enabled us to demonstrate how powerful Byzantine churchmen carved out their own policy with respect to the region, its Khazar hegemons and the Christian aristocracies of the South Caucasus between the late eighth and early tenth centuries (§5.2-4). While Byzantine emperors attempted to integrate Alan rulers into their political system, our non-Byzantine written sources (in Arabic, Georgian, Armenian and Hebrew) indicate that ambitious Alans in fact had multiple models of political culture to turn to (§5.3, 5, 7). Meanwhile, our written sources indicate that the Alans coexisted in the Caucasus with a wide range of other peoples, some of whom continued to reject the forms of authority adopted by Alan rulers (§5.7).

The highlanders living in the North Caucasus in the early middle ages often found themselves faced with the dilemmas provoked by the presence of competing imperial interests, whether in the form of offers of wealth, or titles, or threats of violence. Our written and archaeological sources indicate that at least some highlanders were adept at the 'art of not being governed', at least some of the time.

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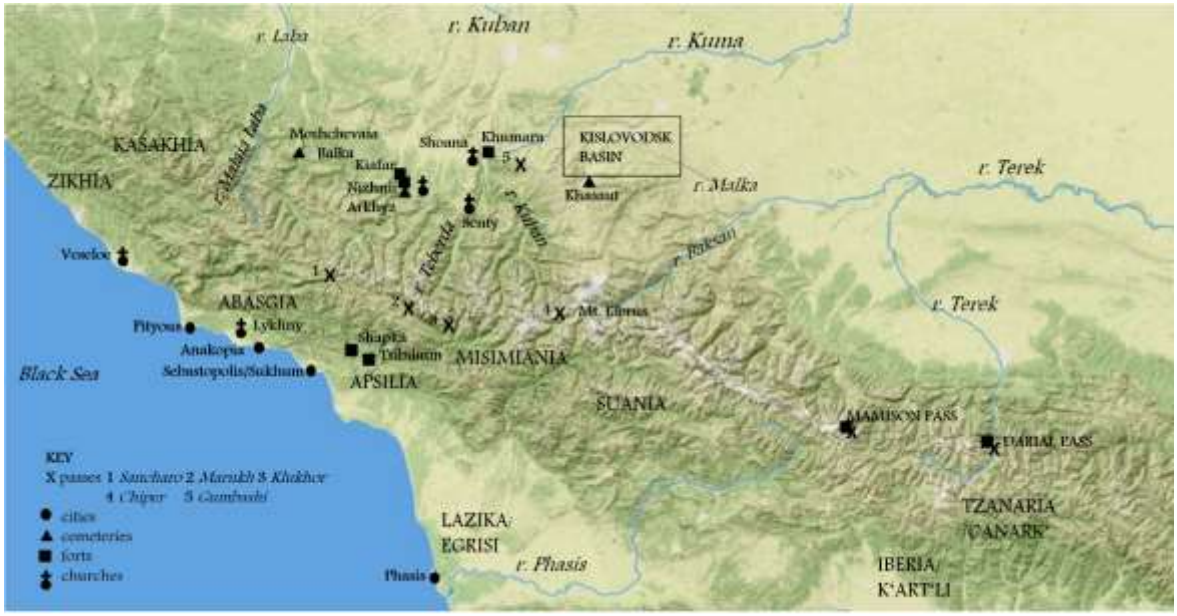
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACO	*Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*
AEMA	*Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*
AnBoll	*Analecta Bollandiana*
AO	*Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia*
BAR Int.	*British Archaeological Reports, International Series*
BGA	*Bibliotheca geographorum arabicorum*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (8 vols., Leiden, 1870–94)
BHG	*Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, ed. F. Halkin, 3rd edn (3 vols., Brussels, 1957)
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BNJ	*Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher*
BSl	*Byzantinoslavica*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and Asian Studies*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
CFHB	*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*
CMH	*Cambridge Medieval History*
CSHB	*Corpus scriptorium historiae byzantinae*
DAI	Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De administrando imperio*
De cerem.	Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
EHB	*The Economic History of Byzantium: from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century,* ed. A.E. Laiou *et al.,* (3 vols., Washington, DC, 2002)
EHR	*English Historical Review*
EI^2	*Encyclopedia Islamica*, 2nd edn.
EME	*Early Medieval Europe*
EncIr	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*
EOb	*Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*
EOr	*Échos d'orient*
EQ	*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, general ed. J.D. McAuliffe (6 vols., Leiden, 2001–6).
EV	*Epigrafika vostoka*
HUS	*Harvard Ukrainian Studies*

IAK	*Izvestiia imperatorskoi akheologicheskoi komisii*
Il Caucaso	*Il Caucaso: cerniera fra cultura del Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI)* (2 vols., Spoleto, 1996)
IOSPE	*Ancient Inscriptions of the Northern Black Sea (Inscriptiones antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini*), vol. 5: *Byzantine Inscriptions*, ed. A. Vinogradov (http://iospe.kcl.ac.uk)
JESHO	*Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient*
JGR	*Jus graeocromanum*, ed. Zepos and Zepos
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der österrichischen Byzantinistik*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain. London*
KSIA	*Kratkie soobshcheniia instituta arkheologiia*
KSIIMK	*Kratkie soobscheniia instituta istorii material'noi kul'tury*
LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones
MAIET	*Materialy po arkheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii*
Mansi	Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova, et amplissima collectio*
MAR	*Materialy po arkheologii Rossii*
MGH Conc.	*Monumenta Germaniae historica. Concilia* (8 vols. to date, Hannover, 1893–)
MGH SRG	*Monumenta Germaniae historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (77 vols. to date, Hannover, 1871–)
MIA	*Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR*
MIAR	*Materialy po istorii i arkheologii Rossii*
NCHI	*New Cambridge History of Islam*
NCMH	*New Cambridge Medieval History*
OAK	*Otchety Imperatorskoi Arkheologicheskoi Komissii*
ODB	*Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* ed. A.P. Kazhdan *et al.* (3 vols., Oxford, 1991)
P&P	*Past and present*
PAEKCh	*Problemy arkheologii i etnografii Karachaevo-Cherkessii*
PBE	*Prosopography of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. J. Martindale, I: *(641– 867)* (http://www.pbe.kcl.ac.uk)
PHI7	*Searchable Greek Inscriptions,* Packard Humanities Institute (http://epigraphy.packhum.org)
PIFK	*Problemy istorii, filologii i kul'tury*

PLRE	*The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire,* ed. A.H.M. Jones *et al.* (3 vols. in 4 pts., Cambridge, 1971–92)
PmbZ	*Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinische Zeit*, ed. R.-J. Lilie *et al*, I: *(641 –867), Prolegomena,* 5 vols. and list of abbreviations; II: *(867 –1025), Prolegomena,* 7 vols. and list of abbreviations (Berlin, 1998 – 2013).
RA	*Rossiiskaia arkheologiia*
REArm	*Révue des ́etudes arméniennes*
REB	*Révue des ́etudes byzantines*
RN	*Revue numismatique*
SA	*Sovetskaia arkheologiia*
SAI	*Svod arkheologicheskikh istochnikov*
SBS	*Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, ed. N. Oikonomides *et al.,* 12 vols. to date (Washington, DC and Munich, 1987–)
SE	*Sovetskaia etnografiia*
SGE	*Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*
SMOMPK	*Sbornik materialov po opisaniiu mestnostei i plemen Kavkaza*
SRAA	*Silk Road Art and Archaeology* (Kamakura, Japan)
TGE	*Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*
TGIM	*Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo Muzeia*
TM	*Travaux et mémoires*
TOBE	*Trudy Otdela Vostoka Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*
UZIIIaL	*Uchenye zapiski instituta istorii, iazyka i literatury im. Gamzata Tsadasy*
VDI	*Vestnik drevnei istorii (Moscow)*
VV	*Vizantiiskii vremennik*
ZhMNP	*Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*
ZRAO	*Zapiski Russkogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva*
ZVRI	*Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*

Map I: The North-West Caucasus



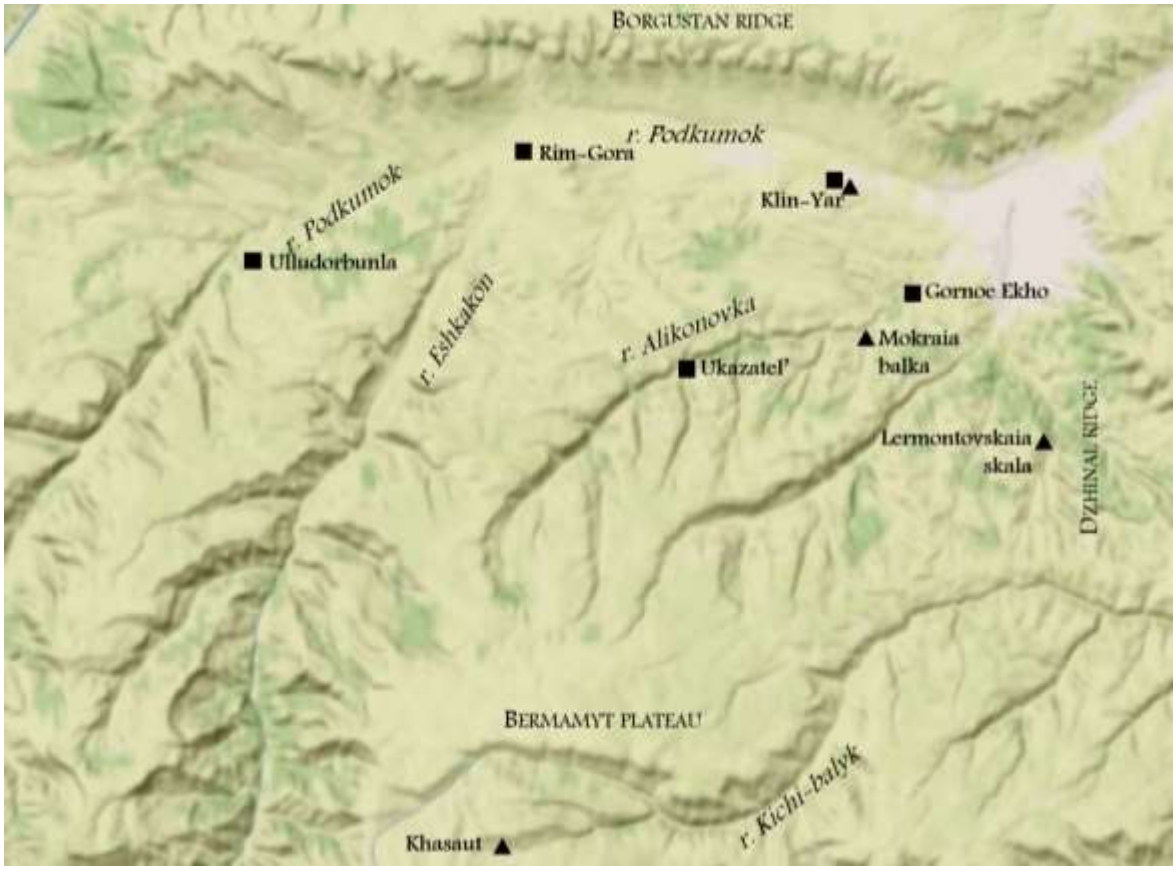
Map II: Centres of Muslim settlement and administration in the north



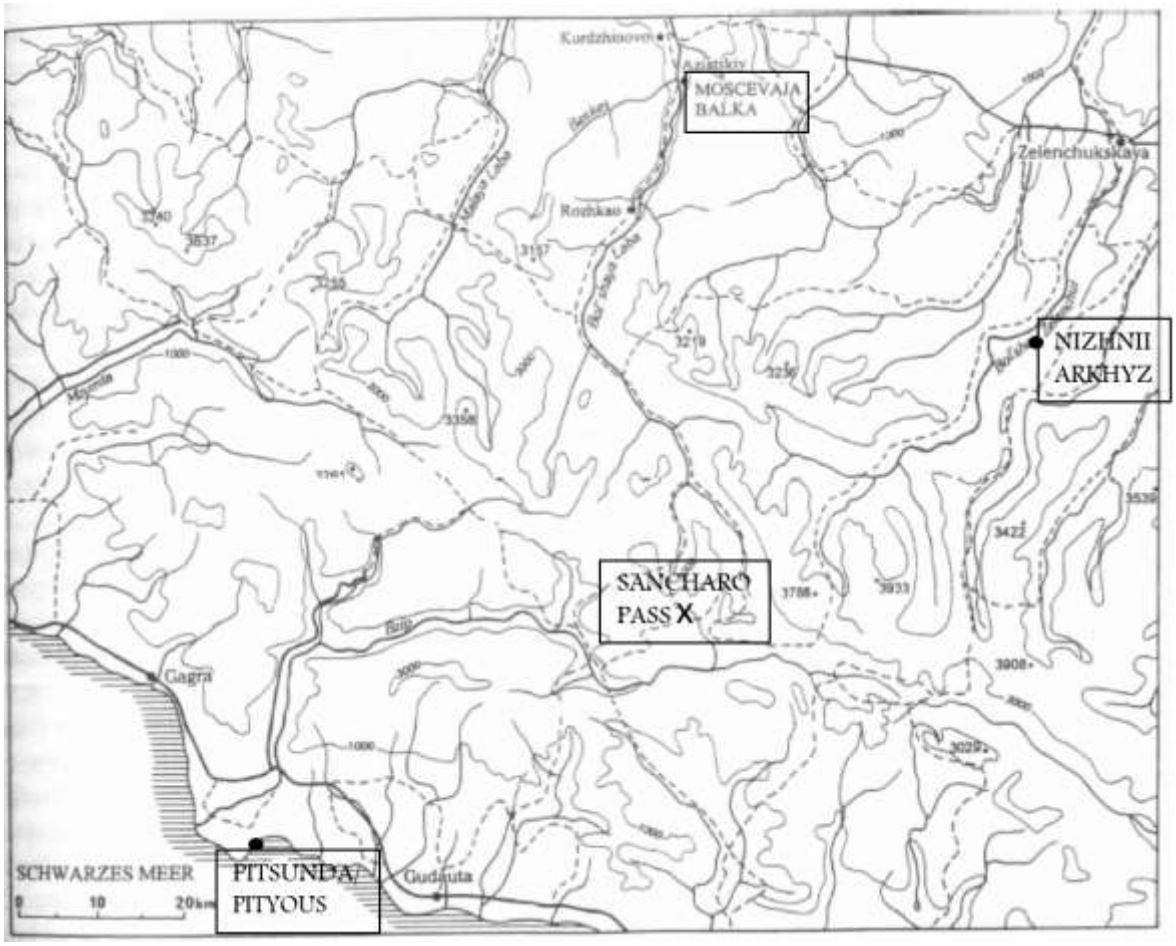
Map III: The North-East Caucasus



Map IV: The Kislovodsk Basin



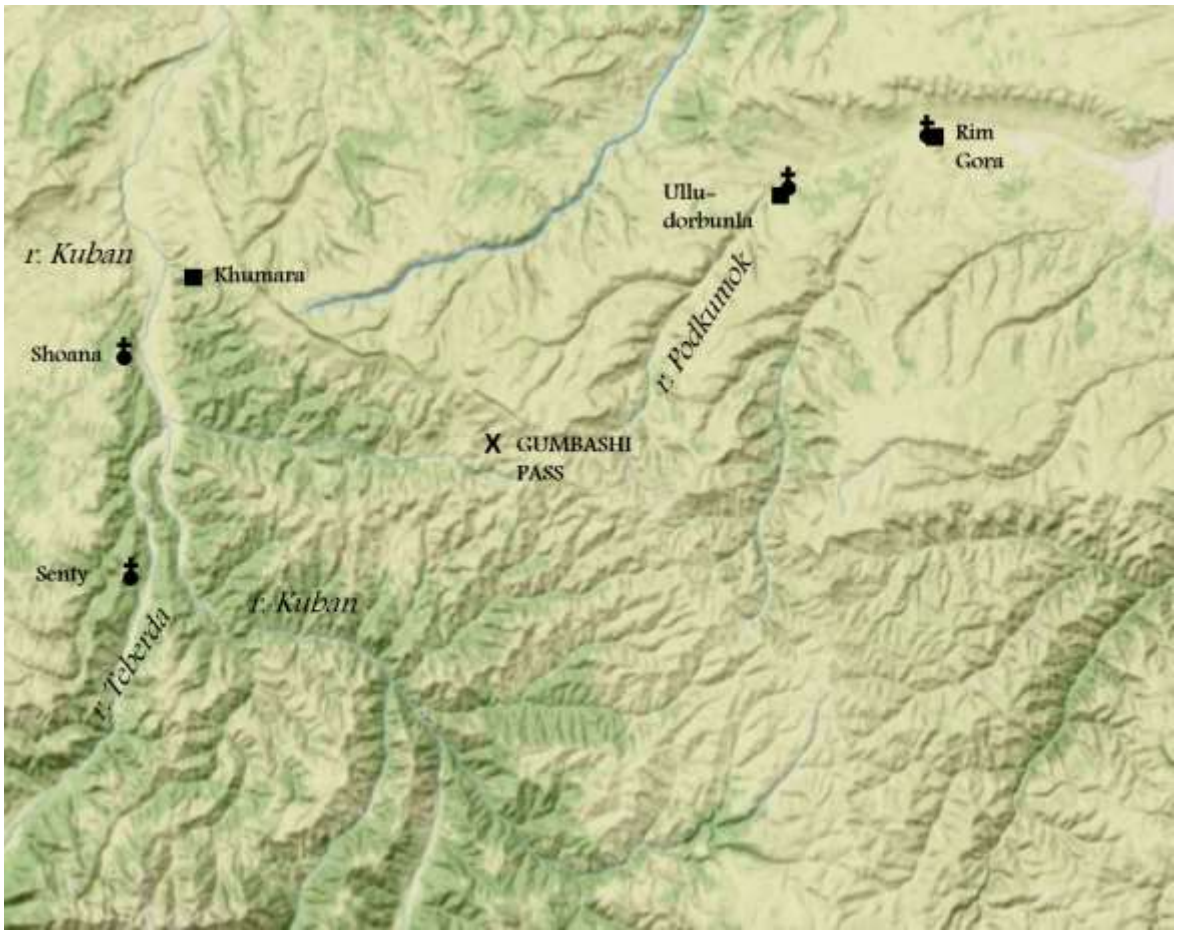
Map V: Moshchevaia Balka and Nizhnii Arkhyz (adapted from Roth 1999, p. 523)



Map VI: Fortresses of Crimea, Taman and the Lower Don (source: Zhivkov 2015, p. 10)



Map VII: Teberda, Upper Kuban' and the Kislovodsk Basin



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: MOUNTAINS, STEPPES AND EMPIRES

1.1 Approaches to the North Caucasus

Tolstoy's novella, *The Cossacks* (1863), begins with a rich young man's journey from Moscow towards the Caucasus. On his journey, Olenin dreams of 'Ammalet-Beks, Circassian women, mountains, precipices, terrible torrents, and perils', variously imagining himself slaughtering highlanders, and joining them to defend their independence from the Russians.[1] He is dismayed by his stop-over in Stavropol, a large town on the watershed between the Azov and the Caspian Seas, as he finds it full of smartly-dressed Russians, and even has signs in French, but becomes much happier when he stops at Cossack villages where he is told it is too dangerous to travel at night, and when they start carrying a loaded gun in their cart. His first sight of the mountains, pointed out to him by his Nogai driver on a grey day, also disappoints him. However, when he wakes the next morning, and sees the 'pure white gigantic masses with delicate contours, the distinct fantastic outlines of their summits showing sharply against the far-off sky', he is elated: 'I have a gun, and strength, and youth… and the mountains!'[2]

People living in the mountain valleys and northern slopes of the Caucasus mountain range between the Black Sea and the Caspian have found themselves on, or just beyond, the often violent edge of empires for over five thousand years.[3] At the same time, the region has resisted

[1] L.N. Tolstoy, 'The Cossacks. A Tale of 1852', tr. L. and A. Maude, in *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories,* ed. R.F. Gustafson, (Oxford, 1997), pp. 186–7. Ammalet-Bek was the hero of a lurid and very popular adventure story set in Dagestan by the Decembrist exile Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, first published in 1832.

[2] Tolstoy, 'The Cossacks', pp. 189–90. The Nogai were descendants of the Mongols, who had used the steppes east of the Azov Sea for pasture until their massacre in the marshes north of the river Yeya by the Russian General Suvorov in 1783: O. Bullough, *Let Our Fame Be Great. Journeys among the Defiant People of the Caucasus* (New York, 2010), pp. 1–5.

[3] First probably during the expansion of Late Uruk 'world system': A. Gulliermo, *The Uruk World System: the Dynamics of Expansion of Early Mesopotamian Civilization*, 2nd edn (Chicago, Ill., 2005); cf. K. Flannery and J.

incorporation into any single empire down to the present day, as the recent wars in Chechnya have illustrated. Tolstoy's novella was written on the eve, in May 1864, of the forced migration of half a million highlanders, mostly from Circassian tribes, to the Ottoman Empire.[4] A century later, in 1944, other North Caucasian peoples were victims of further deportations on orders from Moscow: the Turkic-speaking Karachais and Balkars of the north-west, the Chechens and Ingush in the central North Caucasus, and the Mongolic Kalmykians of the desert and grasslands of the north-east.[5] The impact of Russian imperialism has profoundly changed the demography, ecology and political economy of the region, but, so far, has not obliterated the diversity of languages spoken, or the repeated re-emergence of movements for political autonomy among groups of its inhabitants. The change in the steppes to the north of the Caucasus in recent centuries has been in some ways more profound, as the nomadic peoples who used the grasslands were displaced to make way for agricultural settlers who began to plough up its rich black and dark chestnut soils.[6]

Outsiders have long commented on the diversity of languages spoken in the Caucasus: the tenth-century Muslim historian and geographer al-Mas'ūdī claimed that it contained seventy-two peoples, each with their own king (*malik*), and their own language.[7] In the modern Caucasus, Indo-European languages (Armenian, Ossetic, Kurdish, Tat, Talysh, Greek, Romany, Russian, Ukrainian), Turkic languages (Turkish, Azeri, Kumyk, Nogai, Balkar, Karachai, Turkmen, Karapak) and Semitic languages (Assyrian speakers in Georgia) are spoken along with the Caucasian languages of the north-west (Abkhaz, with the Abaza dialect, Circassian and Ubykh), the Kartvelian languages in the south (Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz and Svan), and the Nakh-Dagestanian

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Marcus, *The Creation of Inequality. How Our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery, and Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012), pp. 448–74; A.G. Frank, and B.K. Gills (eds.), *The World System. Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (London, 1993).

[4] Tolstoy's anti-imperialist masterpiece on Russia's Caucasus wars, *Khadzhii-Murat*, was written much later, and published posthumously in 1912.

[5] G.M. Derlugian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus. A World-System Biography* (Chicago, 2005), pp. 180–3, 359–60 n. 19; Bullough, *Let Our Fame Be Great*, pp. 13–142.

[6] D. Moon, *The Plough that Broke the Steppes. Agriculture and Environment on Russia's Grasslands, 1700–1914* (Oxford, 2013).

[7] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. C. Pellat (7 vols., Beirut, 1966–79) ii, pp. 1–2.

languages in the central and north-eastern Caucasus (comprising Nakh or Veinakh languages spoken by Chechens, Ingush and Bats, as well as the Avaric, Andic, Tsezic, Lak-Dargic and Lezgic groups of languages).[8] The linguistic diversity of the Caucasus is the product of both its openness to the outside world, and its resistance to assimilation.

The simultaneous openness to the wider world, and the preservation of a kaleidoscope of local cultural formations makes the North Caucasus an exciting and challenging region for historical study. For the early medieval period covered by this thesis, we are largely dependent for our written evidence on the literate Georgian and Armenian traditions of the south Caucasus, and the Greek and Arabic writings of outsiders.[9] The written evidence provides valuable opportunities to compare how literate elites of different imperial powers looked at a region that none of them directly controlled. In the minds of ninth- and tenth-century administrators in Baghdad or Constantinople, the North Caucasus was both an object for the contemplation of how (if at all) the world beyond their empires had changed since the 'world crisis' of the seventh century, and a field of policy where others were engaged in the actual process of extending or defending empire.[10] At the same time, we are able to investigate the region 'from within' through its rich burial, settlement and landscape archaeology. Such evidence can allow us to treat the cultural and ecological diversity of the early medieval North Caucasus as a historical phenomenon to be explained, rather than simply a given.

Approaches to the North Caucasus in Russian scholarship since the late eighteenth century have been shaped by the context of imperial power, and by the fascination provoked by the

[8] B.G. Hewitt, *Discordant Neighbours: A Reassessment of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South-Ossetian Conflicts* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 1–7.
[9] Although see §5.6–7 = below for the fragments of Alanic writing, Turkic runes, and Hebrew documents from the Khazar Qaghanate. On the relationship between the Armenian, Georgian, Arabic scripts and the Byzantine 'Commonwealth', see: J. Signes Codoñer, 'New Alphabets for the Christian Nations. Frontier Strategies in the Byzantine Commonwealth between 4th and 10th centuries', in Franciso Heredero, A. de, Hernández de la Fuente, D.A., and Torres Prieto, S. (eds.), *New Perspectives on Late Antiquity in the Eastern Roman Empire* (Newcastle, 2014), pp. 116–62.
[10] 'World crisis': see J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010).

extraordinary linguistic and cultural diversity of the region. Edward Said left the nature of Russian 'Orientalism', as compared to British and French intellectual and cultural production on the Middle East, as an open question.[11] Vera Tolz has argued that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian Orientalist scholars were openly and critically aware of the relationship of scholarship to power; and has argued that critiques of western European Oriental Studies by scholars such as Nikolai (born Nikoloz) Marr and Sergei Ol'denburg exerted an indirect influence on Said's own approach (including his exclusion of Russian imperialism from the critique).[12] The study of Russia's 'own Orient' held a particular cultural significance in wider debates about Russia's relationship to European 'modernity'; academics were often torn between a desire to present themselves as part of a European scholarly community, and to emphasise their particular affinity with, or ability to understand, the histories and cultures of the 'non-European' peoples on the margins of their empire. A Eurasianist trend, anticipated by the work of scholars such as Michaell Rostovtzeff, found different expressions in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian writing about the history of the North Caucasus, of which the most influential in contemporary culture remain the controversial publications of Lev Gumilev.[13]

A definition of the use of the term 'imperialism' with respect to both the modern literature and to the written sources from the period is necessary. The official use of 'empire' as the term to describe Russian political authority in the Caucasus was explicitly rejected after the Russian Revolution, and the national republics that were created in the 1920s were conceived as part of

[11] E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978).
[12] V. Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 80–3.
[13] M.I. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia* (Oxford, 1922); C. Meyer, *Greco-Scythian Art and the Birth of Eurasia: From Classical Antiquity to Russian Modernity* (Oxford, 2013); L.N. Gumilev, *Otkrytie Khazarii: istoriko-geograficheskii etiud* (Moscow, 1966); M. Bassin, *The Gumilev Mystique. Biopolitics, Eurasianism, and the Construction of Community in Modern Russia* (Ithaca, 2016), pp. 82–93; V.A. Shnirelman, 'The Story of a Euphemism: The Khazars in Russian Nationalist Literature', in Golden, P.B., Ben-Shammai, H., and Róna-Tas, A. (eds.), *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 252–72.

an anti-imperialist project.[14] A 1964 publication by Vladimir Kuznetsov reflected the official line when he described the late nineteenth-century establishment of a Russian orthodox monastery at the medieval site of Nizhnii Arkhyz in the North Caucasus as, 'a weapon of [the tsarist government's] colonial policy and the spiritual enslavement of the highlanders'. [15] However, a report he filed in the same year alluded to the recent Soviet deportations of the highlanders: 'the inhabitants of the *aul* [small Caucasian settlement] of Arkhyz, who were mainly Karachai, had only returned to Arkhyz in 1957–8, and did not know the region, so they were unable to tell me anything'.[16] In the post-Soviet period, official discourse still largely eschews the language of empire, but its imagery is freely adopted, and the continuities between the Tsarist period and the republican present are often openly acknowledged and even celebrated. In 2012, Kuznetsov's guide to Arkhyz was published with a preface by a bishop, welcoming the recent restoration of Russian orthodoxy there.[17]

This thesis uses the term 'imperialism' to describe the processes of political and economic domination, ultimately backed up by force, of diverse peoples and territories from centres that sometimes did, and sometimes did not refer to themselves as 'empires'. Mattingly has defended the use of 'imperialism', rather than simply 'empire' with reference to the Roman Empire.[18] In this thesis, 'imperialism' is used to characterise 'power dynamics operating in ranks of systematically

[14] T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (London, 2001); on the effects of the contradiction on archaeology in the Soviet Union's ethnic republics, see: L.S. Klejn, *Soviet Archaeology: Schools, Trends and History*, tr. R. Ireland and K. Windle (Oxford, 2012), p. 137.
[15] V.A. Kuznetsov, 'Severnyi Zelenchukskii khram X veka', *SA* (1965), p. 136.
[16] Akrhiv IA, R-1:2915, p. 180.
[17] V.A. Kuznetsov, *Drevnosti Arkhyza i Kiafara* (Rostov-na-Donu, 2012), p. 5. Kuznetsov's scholarship on the Alans is indispensable, regardless of the different ways official publications present his work; Klejn's guide to 'reading between the lines' in Soviet archaeological publications is partly designed to provoke reflection on compliance and coded resistance in post-Soviet and western academia: Klejn, *Soviet Archaeology*, pp. 82, 186; cf. Flerov's comments on the almost obligatory refutations of Marx in post-Soviet publications: V.S. Flerov, *'Goroda' i 'zamki' Khazarskogo kaganata: arkheologicheskaia real'nost'* (Moscow, 2011), pp. 201–2.
[18] 'I do not accept that the ancient land empires can have nothing in common with the capitalist sea empires of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries or the American airstrip and aircraft carrier imperialism of the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries': D.J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton, N.J., 2011), pp. 6–7.

patterned inequality, rather than […] to represent regime ideology or official order'.[19] Our sources provide perspectives on the North Caucasus from the centres of the 'Abbāsid caliphate and the Byzantine Empire. The term 'Byzantine Empire' is used as a convenient short-hand for the state ruled by the *basileus tōn Rōmaiōn* ('emperor of the Romans') from Constantinople after the seventh century, but 'Byzantine imperialism' can also be seen as a wider phenomenon, which also embraced (for example) the activities of Byzantine churchmen in regions of the North Caucasus where the authority of the emperor was not recognised.[20] Meanwhile, Hugh Kennedy has shown the variety of conceptions the concept of caliphate has had in the Muslim tradition.[21] The seventh-century revolution in the Near East was directed in part against existing forms of Arab kingship as well as Roman and Persian imperialism, and the distinction between 'kingship' (*mulk*) and caliphate (*khilāfa*) has always remained important in Islamic political thought. However, Andrew Marsham has shown the extent to which Umayyad and 'Abbāsid caliphs also drew on a 'shared cultural heritage with ancient Near Eastern rulership'.[22] Moreover, when we turn to the process of empire on the North Caucasian frontier, rather than the political theory of rulership, we find our sources talking explicitly about continuities with earlier empires.[23]

Nationalism has also inflected approaches to the early medieval history of the North Caucasus. In modern Russian scholarly literature, this is often referred to as a problem caused by competing 'national minorities' within the Caucasus. A number of publications in the early 1990s lamented the decline of academic communication between people of ethnic Russian and different

[19] Used in such a way, it become applicable to both the 'post-imperial' present and to pre-modernity: D. Ludden, 'The Process of Empire: Frontiers and Borderlands', in P.F. Bang and C.A. Bayly (eds.), *Tributary Empires in Global History* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 135.
[20] On the meanings of 'empire' in scholarship on Byzantium: A. Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge, Mass., 2015), p. xiv. Obolensky's 'Byzantine Commonwealth' suggested a parallel with the mid-twentieth century British response to its loss of formal imperial domination; as in the British case, Byzantine imperialism did not, however, stop dead where 'Commonwealth' began: D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500–1453* [1971] (London, 2000); cf. G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J., 1993).
[21] H. Kennedy, *The Caliphate* (London, 2016).
[22] A. Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 1–2.
[23] For the 'process of empire' and the 'reproduction of imperial forms' in frontier regions, see: Ludden, 'Process of Empire', pp. 132–50.

Caucasian nationalities. As Derluguian has shown, the ethnic conflicts within the Caucasus were themselves the products of the break-up of the Soviet developmentalist state, whose 'nationalities policies' had done so much to prepare the ground for the subsequent conflicts.[24] Much of this thesis is concerned with the Alans, who were speakers of an Iranic language, attested in the steppes and mountains of the North Caucasus from the first century CE, and some of whom converted to Christianity in the tenth century. An indispensable guide has been Agustí Alemany's compendium of sources in eleven languages, from Catalan to Chinese, referring to the Alans between the first or second century BCE and the fifteenth century CE.[25] The mainly Christian Ossetians in the central Caucasus, who are also speakers of Iranic languages (Iron and Digor), claim descent from the Alans; the official name of their republic on the north of the Caucasus mountains is now the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania.[26] Meanwhile, other inhabitants of the region, such as the Turkic Karachais and Balkars sometimes also claim Alan ancestors. Debates over the attribution of given archaeological sites, objects or even inscriptions to Alans, Bulgars or other Caucasian peoples, can be highly charged.[27]

If scholarship on the North Caucasus in Russia and the republics has wrestled with the effects of modern imperialism and nationalist conflict, it has also produced a unique body of material and ideas with which to approach the history of early medieval western Eurasia. Scholars outside the former USSR are showing increasing awareness of the literary and archaeological material that the South Caucasus can provide historians of the agrarian empires of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.[28] This thesis brings the northern slopes into the picture. Meanwhile, studies of the

[24] Derluguian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer*, pp. 166–218.
[25] A. Alemany, *Sources on the Alans: a Critical Compilation* (Leiden, 2000).
[26] Constantine Zuckerman's objection, on grounds of his historical reconstruction of the Alans and As/Ossetians on the evidence of the seventh-century Armenian geography of Ananias of Širak, may be beside the point: C. Zuckerman, 'À propos du *Livre des cérémonies,* II, 48', *TM*, 13 (2000), p. 562.
[27] See for example the discussion of the attempts to read the inscription on a stone cross found (and then lost) in the region of Nizhnii Arkhyz in Karachaevo-Cherkessia in different Caucasian languages: L. Zgusta, *The Old Ossetic Inscription from the River Zelenčuk* (Wien, 1987).
[28] E.g. S.H.Rapp, *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature* (Farnham, 2014).

interactions between the agrarian empires and the nomadic empires of the south Russian steppe often conceive of the mountains in between as simply a barrier to be breached, rather than as a dense cultural zone in its own right.[29] This thesis will show how the written and archaeological evidence exists to look at the interactions between imperial powers, steppe nomads and the highlanders from the perspective of imperial centres and on the ground in the region itself, and to gain an understanding of how the region's extraordinary cultural diversity emerged and was preserved through the encounter.

1.2 Beyond the edge of empires

The written sources produced at the heart of empires, in Constantinople or 'Abbāsid Iraq, show us how the 'official mind' looked at the North Caucasus.[30] For the 'official mind', strategic geography loomed large. However, the strategic geography of the North Caucasus is not an immutable fact of its geology, but a product of history. Dynamics of centralisation, competition and resistance shaped the production of knowledge about the natural environment of the Great Caucasus Mountain range by imperial administrators, soldiers, local fixers and highlanders keen to keep out of the way of tribute-takers, slave-raiders and passing armies. Textual traditions reproduced appraisals of key passes to be defended or breached; the infrastructures of fortifications, roads and open settlements helped fix them in physical space. Much harder to trace, but often of equal or greater importance, were those stored in the memory and orally transmitted by the highlanders who travelled through the mountains for their own purposes. The creation of a feature of strategic geography (such as a pass), or the creation of a strategic

[29] For a correction to an equivalent trend in the historiography of China and Inner Asia: J.K. Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors: Culture, Power, and Connecgtions, 580–800* (Oxford, 2012).
[30] On the social, geographical and institutional location of the 'official mind' in the context of nineteenth-century British imperialism: R. Robinson, J. Gallagher and A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians. The Official Mind of Imperialism,* 2nd edn (London, 1981); J. Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians: the Dynamics of Territorial Expansion', *HER*, 122 (447) (1997), pp. 614–42.

resource (such as naphtha or horses), was the outcome of the establishment of a social relationship between people able to exert direct control over the space (such as a frontier garrison or a tribe) or acquire the resource (the possessor of a naphtha field and the requisite labour to extract it, or horses and the pastures to feed it), and the people who were persuaded to see the territory or the resource as crucial to some wider set of objectives.[31]

The North Caucasus can be seen as a 'hinterland' in relation to the imperial cores. Gills and Frank's concept of core-periphery-hinterland relationships distinguishes between periphery and hinterland. The hinterland provides the core and periphery with resources, including human labour but, unless it undergoes a process of 'peripheralisation', it preserves a degree of social autonomy. It may also 'facilitate the transfer of surplus between zones of the world system'.[32] The oldest set of imperial core-periphery-hinterland relationships to be established with the North Caucasus appear to have been those with the agrarian societies of Mesopotamia and Iran, via the creation of satellite settlements in the South Caucasian periphery.[33] The Greek colonisation of the Black Sea coast created new patterns: Alfonso Moreno has argued that Athenian democracy in the fifth century BCE depended upon supplies of grain from the North Black Sea region that hinged on ties between Athenian oligarchs, Bosporan nobles and Spartokid kings. These ties in turn shaped the cultures of all the societies involved.[34] In the South Caucasus the peripheries came into direct contact; the significance of the North Caucasian hinterland for both was potentially enhanced by the competition between them. The creation of nomadic imperial confederacies in the Eurasian steppe, beginning with the Hsiung-nu (200 BE – 150 CE),

[31] See §§2.3, 2.6, 5.6 below. Cf. Mitchell's account of how in the early twentieth century, 'Western oil companies began to describe their control of overseas oil as an "imperial" interest of the state, or in later language as a "strategic" interest' in order to draw on the military and financial support to which 'imperially minded political leaders' could give them access: T. Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy. Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London, 2011), p. 45.
[32] B.K. Gills and A.G. Frank, 'The Cumulation of Accumulation', in Frank and Gills (eds.), *World System*, pp. 94–6.
[33] See §1.1 above.
[34] A. Moreno, *Feeding the Democracy. The Athenian Grain Supply in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC* (Oxford, 2007).

added a further set of dynamics in competition and interdependence with the circuits of accumulation centred upon the northern periphery of the Fertile Crescent and the eastern periphery of the Black Sea.[35]

The strategic geography of the North Caucasus was a point of debate between imperial powers and within their elites. Chapter two of this thesis analyses the account of the fifth- and sixth-century Sasanian reinforcement of the frontier in the north recorded in the work of the ninth-century 'Abbāsid historian al-Balādhurī. Sixth-century Roman sources reveal disputes between the Romans and the Sasanians over who should pay for the upkeep of the fortifications. John Lydos gives an account of 'Why the Persians throughout ancient times daily were trying to extract gold, just as if owed', where he argues that the Persian demands, 'that both governments with mutually shared expenses construct a fort at the aforesaid ingress [the Darband Pass] and station a military force in the area for curbing the barbarians running down through it', were simply a pretext for extracting money for defences that were more important to the Sasanians than they were to the Romans.[36] However, the force of complaints from the Roman senatorial elite about the sending out of resources for the protection of frontiers, whether as payments to the Sasanians, or subsidies to 'barbarians' living on or beyond the periphery, was also directed at their own government.[37] The question of how much, and what forms, of wealth could be allowed to leave the empire's internal circuits of accumulation was always also a question of who should pay the cost, and who would enjoy the rewards, of expenditure to protect or expand future accumulation.[38]

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[35] These in turn depended on developments within the Chinese economy: T. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 8–16; on Bronze Age integration of the Eurasian steppes, see: D.W. Anthony, *The Horse, the Wheel and Language* (Princeton, NJ, 2007), pp. 412–57.

[36] John Lydos, *De magistratibus*, ch. 51–2 (ed. A.C. Bandy, pp. 240–4; tr. pp. 290–3).

[37] Procopius, *Secret History*, xix, ch. 6–9.

[38] As chapters four and five demonstrate, the form as well as the quantity of wealth was important: the leakage of currencies or luxury items to the periphery or hinterland could undermine systems of rank within the imperial elites.

In the sixth century, the passes through the North-West Caucasus to the Black Sea coast of Lazika became an important strategic concern for the Byzantine Empire. This was in turn a product of war in Lazika, which it was feared could give the Sasanians access to the Black Sea. Once again, the flow of investment that accompanied the appraisal of a frontier region as strategically vital could be the subject of debate within the imperial core. For example, Prokopios preserves two very different assessments of the establishment of a major Byzantine settlement at Petra on the Lazikan coast in the *Wars* and the *Buildings*: in the former, its governor John Tzibos is castigated as a 'tradesman governor' for using imperial resources to choke the Lazikan economy for his own enrichment; in the latter, it is presented in glowing terms as a project of Justinian, the Christian emperor-builder.[39]

The passes through the North-West Caucasus provided a means through which the Byzantines could make contact with the Turkic hegemons of the Eurasian steppe. The fragments of the *History* of Menander the Guardsman, describes the return of the Byzantine envoy Zemarkhos from a journey of the Turk Qaghan Sizabul in Central Asia in 569–71. Menander portrays the Sogdians, who were tributary to the Turks, as playing an active role in the establishment of friendly relations between the Byzantine and Turk Empires, motivated by the desire to find a market for Sogdian raw silk. The Sogdian leader, Maniakh, had initially persuaded Sizabul to send him as an envoy to the Sasanians, but the Sasanian ruler Khosrow I Anushirwān (r. 531–79) demonstratively burnt the Sogdian raw silk. After a second unsuccessful Turk embassy to the Sasanians, Maniakh persuaded Sizabul to send him through the Caucasus with raw silk to sell to the Byzantines instead.[40] The Byzantine emperor Justin II (r. 565–78) sent Zemarkhos in response, where an alliance against the Sasanians was concluded. One part of the returning Byzantine embassy was sent ahead, presumably directly to the Straits of Kerch', while Zemarkhos and the leader of the tribe of the Kholiatai who had specifically asked to be sent (thereby breaking the

[39] Procopius, *Wars*, ii, ch. 15.5; *Buildings*, iii, ch. 7.6–7.
[40] Menander the Guardsman, *History*, fr. 10.1 (ed. Blockley, pp. 110–16).

monopoly on contacts and knowledge of the routes enjoyed by the Sogdians and other Turk tribes), travelled through the Caucasus. They hear reports of Persians waiting for them in ambush as they travel across the North Caucasian steppe, which may be a valuable piece of evidence for the projection of Sasanian power into the hinterland beyond their fortifications in the mountains.[41]

On arrival in the 'land of the Alans', there was a three-day stand-off. The Alan ruler Sarosios was prepared to receive Zemarkhos, but insisted that his Turkish envoys disarm: according to the report, it was only with Zemarkhos' mediation that the latter finally laid down their weapons.[42] During the stay, Sarosios warned Zemarkhos not to travel back through Misimia, 'because the Persians were lying wait for them in Suania', and advised them to return by another route, referred to in the text as 'Dareine'.

> Zemarkhos sent porters carrying silk through Misimia to deceive the Persians into thinking that the silk had been sent ahead and was travelling first along the road, so they would assume that he would appear on the next day. When the porters had left, Zemarkhos travelled through Dareine to the land of the Apsilii, leaving Misimia, where the Persians were thought to be lying in ambush, behind on the left.

The final stages of Zemarkhos's itinerary took him to Rogatorium, identified by Iurii Voronov with the fortress of Shapka near Tsibilium/Tsebelda, and then down to the Black Sea, sailing first to the river Phasis and then on to Trebizond (see Map I).[43]

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[41] Menander the Guardsman, *History*, fr. 10.2–4 (ed. Blockley, pp. 116–24).

[42] On Sarosios q.v. 'Saroes', *PLRE*, iii, b, p. 1115; he later fought as a Byznatine ally against the Persians alongside the Colchians and Abasgians in a campaign of 573: Theophanes of Byzantium, fr. 4, *FHG*, iv, ed. Müller (Paris, 1851), p. 271 = Photios, *Bibliotheca*, i, 64, ed. and French tr. R. Henry (Paris, 1959), p. 79.

[43] Menander the Guardsman, *History*, fr. 10.5 (ed. and tr. Blockley, pp. 126–27). There have been many attempts to map Zemarkhos's itinerary: one plausible version envisages the porters taking the 'Misimian' route crossing the mountains via the Chiper pass (Pass No. 4, Map I), while Zemarkhos crossed by the Klukhor pass (Pass No. 3, Map I): V.B. Kovalevskaia, *Komp'iuternaia obrabotka massovogo arkheologicheskogo materiala iz rannesrednevekovykh pamiatnikov Evrazii. Khronologiia vostochnoevropeiskikh drevnostei v–ix vekov*, vol. ii – *Stekliannnye busy i poiasnye nabory* (Moscow, 2000), pp. 211–12; cf. Iu.N. Voronov, 'Eshche raz o rannesrednevekovykh peraval'nykh putiakh cherez zapadnyi Kavkaz' [1992], in A.B. Belinskii (ed.), *Materialy po izucheniiu istoriko-kul'turnogo naslediia Severnogo Kavkaza*, vol. 8.: *Krupnovskie chteniia: 1971–2006* (Stavropol', 2008), p. 485; E.V. Rtveladze, 'ΔΑΡΕΝΗΣ ἈΤΡΟΠΊΟΝ: marshrut vizantiiskogo posol'stva Zimarkha po Srednei Azii i Kavkaza', *PIFK,* 47 (2015), pp. 354–64, with comments by O.Kh. Bgazhba in *PIFK,* 49 (2015), pp. 465–6. Blockley's identification of the 'Dareine route' with the Darial pass, and his location of Rogatorium cannot be right: Menander, *History*, pp. 266–7.

In this account, local knowledge is key. The Alan ruler Sarosios is able to make himself useful to Zemarkhos by warning him of the movement of the Persians, and by providing him with instructions on an alternative route. Alan knowledge of the terrain may also have been an important bargaining chip in the negotiations with the armed Turk envoys, even if the Byzantine source (which presumably originates from Zemarkhos's own report in some form or another), gives Zemarkhos credit for the mediation. The report never specifies what happened to the silk that the porters carried into Misimia: was it in fact sold to the Persians supposedly lying in wait there? Chapter four of the thesis will consider the implications of local knowledge for the silk economy of the North-West Caucasus in the eighth to tenth centuries.

1.3 The ecology of the hinterland

Local knowledge was not simply relevant for the ability that it gave the inhabitants of the mountains to influence the military, diplomatic and commercial manoeuvrings of richer and more powerful neighbours. It formed the basis for the agrarian and pastoral economies of the mountain regions themselves. Chapter three of the thesis provides a study of the systems of settlement and agricultural production in the Kislovodsk Basin in the North-West Caucasus. Modern soil science and plant pathology owe their origins in part to Russian scholars who turned to the study of agrarian production in the Caucasus Mountains as a response to the terrible famines in southern Russia's black earth region in 1891–2. The famines were in part the product of the ecological vulnerability caused by the turning over of steppe grasslands to large-scale grain production. Scholars interested in the resilient polycultures found in the Caucasus Mountains explicitly drew connections between the variety of its seeds and languages (see §3.2).

On the identification of Rogatorium with Shapka, see: Iu.N. Voronov, M. Kazanski and A. Mastykova, *Tsibilium. La nécropole apsile de Tsibilium* (2 vols., Oxford, 2007), p. 17. See §4.4 below for the journey of Leo the *spathari*n the opposite direction, and §6 for Agathias on the Misimians.

The assessment of the evidence for changes in the systems of agrarian production in the Kislovodsk Basin during the first millennium involves a discussion of technological change. Shifts between the use of different types of field and settlement pattern are considered in relationship to proxy evidence for the changing structures of social relations, and for changes in the forces of production. Once again, local knowledge, techniques learned and taught, may have been more important than the specific forms of tools (such as ploughs) used; and the evolution of the latter may accordingly have had more complex trajectories than is sometimes assumed. Technologies involve ideas as well as material objects: decisions about the burial of new forms of military technology (such as spurs) will have reflected a range of ideas about the place of the deceased within the community, the structure of that community, and its place in the wider world.

The ecology of the North Caucasus's relationship to its imperial neighbours was characterised by contradictory logics of diversification and homogenisation. James Scott emphasises the production of monocultures by imperial states, through the 'gathering in' of people, the centralised deployment of human labour and the collection and redistribution of surpluses; in contrast, his concept of a 'shatter zone' invokes the way people consciously disperse and create new and shifting ethnic identities in order to avoid incorporation into state-building projects.[44] His model is applied in particular to Southeast Asia, where it might be argued, following Braudel, that the dynamic of lowland tax-raising (and hence of upland evasion) is shaped in part by the peculiarity of rice cultivation, which can be carried on year after year; by contrast, the conditions of wheat production in western Eurasia demand field rotations and hence a more mixed economy.[45] Horden and Purcell insist on fragmentation and dispersed hinterlands as a specifically marked feature of Mediterranean ecology.[46] However, the contrast should not be overstated, as

[44] J.C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed. An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, 2009).
[45] F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*. 1: *The Structures of Everyday Life*, trans. M. Kochan and S. Reynolds (London, 1985), p. 114.
[46] P. Horden, and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000).

the centrality of the interactions between Chinese agrarian production and the pastoral economy of the Turko-Mongolian borderlands and beyond should make clear.[47] The problem of how to expand the volume of surplus accumulation without undermining its ecological basis exists within all expanding states, and is closely connected to the extent and limits of 'peripheralisation' of the hinterland.

Bang and Bayly describe the 'hierarchical ordering of diversity' as a characteristic feature of tributary empires.[48] This accurately describes the way a number of the texts discussed in this thesis make a virtue of the variety of different peoples of the Caucasus who accept the authority of the Byzantine emperor, or its Patriarch, or the 'Abbāsid caliph, while also creating elaborate hierarchies of ranking between them. One of the features in common between the texts known conventionally (and not entirely helpfully) as *De administrando imperio* (*DAI*) and the *Futūḥ al-buldān* of al-Balādhurī is the surprising variation in category of material for the different geographical regions covered. In both cases, this has been treated as evidence for absence of systematic thought on the part of the compilers, but it may in fact be part of the point. Chapter five of the thesis includes discussions of episcopal lists and lists of foreign dignatories, revealing attempts to create an impression of order and hierarchy where the situation was often much more fluid. The accumulation of power through the 'gathering in of peoples' from the hinterland was not simply a quantitative but also a qualitative exercise: the list of slaves delivered to the city of Bāb al-Abwāb discussed in chapter two is an illustration of the possible social consequences of the fact.

[47] e.g. A.M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 2nd edn., tr. J. Crookenden (Madison, 1994); T. Barfiled, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1575* (Oxford, 1989); J.K. Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors: Culture, Power, and Connections, 580–800* (Oxford, 2012).
[48] P.F. Bang and C.A. Bayly, 'Tributary Empires – Towards a Global and Comparative History', in id. (ed.), *Tributary Empires in Global History* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 4.

1.4 Fragments of empires

Scott's 'shatter zone' deliberately invokes the concept of a new world built from fragments: key to his argument is that the cultures of the non-state peoples of Upland Southeast Asia ('Zomia') are constructed in deliberate opposition to states, and are not simply innocent survivals of a pre-state past. The image of shattering is also employed by Richard White to describe the background to the creation of a 'middle ground' between French traders and missionaries, and the Algonquians in the *pays d'en haut*: 'the fragments are the history'.[49] White acknowledges his debt to Lévi-Strauss's *bricolage* for his approach to the way people make culture from the materials at hand, while giving his use a historical specificity in the encounter between people from radically different worlds in a context where neither could impose their will on the other by force.[50] This thesis looks at *bricolage* at both the centres and in the hinterlands of empires.

On a large scale, the long-term reproduction of the idea and economic reality of the North Caucasus as an imperial hinterland occurred through the re-use of older fragments of infrastructure, material culture and texts. Chapter two looks at how al-Balādhurī invokes legacies of Sasanian (and also Roman) imperialism in the Caucasus, and argues that the specific way in which he puts his materials together may in part be a response to local dynasties in the Eastern Caucasus laying claiming to those legacies for their own purposes. At the same time, he provides indications of the diverse types of resources in the region that had been exploited in the past under various legal or institutional frameworks, and the claims that the 'Abbāsid state could make upon them: the picture is both fragmented and centralising. The diversity of the types of oral reports and written evidence used to build up the picture of the North Caucasus in 'Abbāsid Iraq

[49] R. White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815,* 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2011), p. 2.

[50] Lévi-Strauss distinguished between the 'mythical' mode of thought of the *bricoleur*, the 'Jack-of-all-trades', who makes do with any raw materials and tools at hand, and the 'scientific' thought of the engineer who specially procures the latter for the purpose of a specific project: C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 2nd edn. (London, 1972), pp. 16–36; as White points out, the distinction need not 'describe societies with utterly discrete and incommensurate ways of thinking': White, *Middle Ground*, pp. xvii–xviii.

or tenth-century Constantinople is an important cultural fact about both the court and administrative culture of the cores, and the nature of interactions on the periphery.

On a much more local scale, chapter three shows how inhabitants of the Kislovodsk Basin made use of the residues of earlier organisations of its landscape: its abandoned agricultural terraces, fortifications and burial sites. Productive strategies, settlement hierarchies and mortuary rituals were influenced by the traces of former human action. This has implications for the assessment of cultural continuities and discontinuities, whether associated with migrations or endogenous social change. The question of what happened in the Kislovodsk Basin between the eighth and tenth centuries has assumed importance in the Russian historiography of the history of the Khazar Qaghanate; chapter three will ask whether, as much of the literature suggests, the Alans really migrated out of the region and came back two centuries later to pick up the pieces.

Meanwhile, chapter four approaches *bricolage* through dress ensembles. The diverse styles, materials, images, currency tokens and fragments of text that were used to dress the bodies of men, women and children laid in the rock burials of the North-West Caucasus allow us to see one aspect of how eighth- to tenth-century people defined their relationship to the outside world. The ensembles reflect choices about which items should and could be buried with the dead, and cannot necessarily be considered a direct reflection of how the living dressed themselves or their children in ordinary life. The cemetery of Moshchevaia Balka appears to have contained the burials of some visitors from distant societies, possibly including a Chinese monk and a young high-ranking Byzantine official. The circumstances of their deaths and burials are not known, but the decision of the inhabitants of the Upper Kuban' to provide them with space in their cemetery, and to bury them with personal effects, suggests a form of integration of outsiders into their burial community: an example of an attempt to make a common symbolic language out of the materials at hand in ways perhaps comparable to those White saw as characteristic of the 'middle ground'.

1.5 Shadows of empires

The diversity of the North Caucasus remarked upon in the medieval sources, and the opaqueness of much of its geography to outsiders, make it possible that groups of its inhabitants were able to carve out spaces for the kinds of egalitarian, state-evading societies that Scott argues can be found (or could be found until recently) in 'Zomia'. However, they have, almost by definition, largely kept out of our sources. Outsiders did not describe the Alans in terms that emphasised their egalitarianism in any period, and it does not appear that this was a characteristic that people chose to emphasise when they called themselves Alans. Chapter three argues that many of the inhabitants of the Kislovodsk Basin may have managed to maintain a significant degree of autonomy from the regional elite between around the fifth and eighth centuries, but they were certainly not averse to using the imagery of hierarchy and gender inequality. Equally, archaeological and written sources provide examples of when highlanders and outsiders carved out a 'middle ground' in these centuries and this region, but they also provide plenty of examples of when highlanders or outsiders were moved to use force to impose their will.

The North Caucasus was in the shadows of empires. Carolyn Nordstrom's ethnographic study of twenty-first century warzones stresses the linkages between different types of non-state networks, from smuggling to official corruption to informal rural economies.[51] Her concept of the 'shadows' is useful for approaching our sources, since it draws attention to the dilemmas about the hidden sources of social power that existed for those at the very top and centre of imperial hierarchies, and for those living in remote highlander communities. Texts such as the *Futūḥ al-buldān* of al-Balādhurī, the letter collections of the Byzantine Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos, or the compilations and manuals of statecraft commissioned by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos make strong normative claims about the proper forms of relationship between

[51] C. Nordstrom, *Shadows of War. Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2004).

peripheral peoples and the imperial centre, but reveal the existence of non-formal (rather than informal) networks alongside the official channels.[52]

We occasionally catch glimpses of the way non-formal networks stretched right to the centre of power when they become the subject of tension or conflict, such as in the ambivalent portrait of the Umayyad governor Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik in al-Balādhurī (see chapter two), or the strange incident of the burning of the empress Theodora's cargo ship recounted in *Theophanes Continuatus*.[53] At the other end of the spectrum, in chapter three we look at the ways the burial communities of the North-West Caucasus chose to make wealth obtained from contacts with other societies visible or invisible through their practices of dress, deposition and possibly exhumation. The background of slave raiding and trading glimpsed through our written sources in chapters two and five may have given these rituals particular charge. Nordstrom emphasises that shadow political economies 'are more than sprawling, value-neutral international market networks. They fashion economic possibilities, they broker political power, and importantly, they constitute cultures, for these networks of power and exchange are governed by rules of exchange, codes of conduct, hierarchies of deference and power'.[54] This thesis is about the making of those cultures, alongside the making and remaking of more formal relations between the peoples of the North Caucasus and their imperial neighbours, between the eighth and tenth centuries.

[52] Whereas 'informal' often implies 'small-scale, low-income, low-tech, and subsitence level economic activities', Nordstrom's term 'non-formal' embraces 'the relationships among (small-scale) survival economics, (large-scale) corruption, and (international) extra-state empires': Nordstrom, *Shadows of War*, p. 107.
[53] Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographiae Libri I–IV*, iii, ch. 4, ed. Featherstone and Codoñer, pp. **XX**; cf. §5.6 below.
[54] Nordstrom, *Shadows of War*, p. 107.

CHAPTER 2

GRAIN, SLAVES, OIL AND LIVESTOCK:

THE VIEW FROM NINTH-CENTURY IRAQ

2.1 The chapter on Armīniya in *Futūḥ al-buldān* of al-Balādhurī

Ibn Khurradādhbih transmits a fragment of poetry that he ascribes to the Persian poet, Bārbad, minstrel to the Sasanian Shāhānshāh Khosrow II Parvēz (r. 590–628):

> The Caesar resembles the moon, the Khāqān the sun.
> My lord is powerful like the cloud:
> At will he covers the moon and at will the sun.[55]

Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 300/911) was a court companion (*nadīm*) of the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Mu'tamid (r. 256–79/870–92). Travis Zadeh has argued that Ibn Khurradādhbih's own role, combining that of a senior administrator (*kātib*) and a *littérateur* (*adīb*), was 'stylized, in part, to reflect Sasanian courtly practice'.[56] By implication, Ibn Khurradādhbih invoked his patron, the 'Abbāsid caliph, as heir to the Sasanian Shāhānshāh, in a tripartite division of the world, between the Romans (Byzantines), the Turks (Khazars) and Persians ('Abbāsids). Zadeh's rich study of Ibn Khurradādhbih's account of the journey of Sallām the Translator (*tarjumān*) through the Caucasus during the reign of the caliph al-Wāthiq (r. 227–32/842–7) shows how the activities of translation and mapping frontiers were at once a cultural appropriation of the Greek and Persian literary

[55] Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Mukhtār min kitāb al-lahw wa'l-malāhī,* ed. I.'A. Khalīfa (Beirut, 1969), p. 18; cited in T. Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers Across Medieval Islam. Geography, Translation, and the 'Abbāsid Empire* (London, 2011), p. 31; A. Tafazzoli, 'Some Middle-Persian Quotations in Classical Arabic and Persian Texts', in Ph. Gignoux, A. Tafazzoli (eds.), *Mémorial Jean de Menasce* (Louvain, 1974), p. 338; A. Tafażżolī, 'Bārbad', *EncIr*, iii, fasc. 7, pp. 757–8.
[56] Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, p. 17.

heritage, and a practical necessity for the administration of frontiers: they were necessarily activities carried out at the heart of empire, and on its margins.[57]

A similar approach can fruitfully be applied to the chapter on the Caucasus in the *Futūḥ al-buldān* by Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir al-Balādhurī to reveal how senior figures in the 'Abbāsid administration conceived their imperial project, and its relationship to the imperial projects that preceded it and competed with it.[58] For the purposes of this thesis, it provides a valuable window onto how the 'official mind' approached the topography of power in the North Caucasus; this will provide a point of comparison for the approaches to the region taken by Byzantine imperial and ecclesiastical elites, discussed in chapter five. Al-Balādhurī's chapter on the Caucasus ('Armīnīya') has often been used in modern scholarship for mapping out the historical geography of the North Caucasus, and for constructing narrative histories of the 'Arab-Khazar wars'.[59] However, until recently, there has been relatively little (published) reflection on how al-Balādhurī collected, shaped and generated his influential descriptions and narratives, and why.[60]

It will be argued that, contrary to the position taken by scholars such as Albrecht Noth, elements of a 'unified historical picture' do emerge from al-Balādhurī's text.[61] The chapter on Armīnīya is both internally coherent, and occupies a deliberate place within the wider historical and geographical unfolding of the *Futūḥ* text. The chapter has often been raided in the modern

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[57] Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers,* p. 7.
[58] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān,* ed. M. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), pp. 193 – 212; English trans.: P.K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, (New York, 1968), i, pp. 305–31; French trans., with comm.: J. Laurent, *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam depuis la conquête arabe jusqu'en 886,* revised M. Canard (Lisbon, 1980), pp. 547–62, 566–78; I have also consulted MS BL Add. 23264, fo. 44 obv.–48 obv. and the edition of Salaḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Cairo, 1956), i, pp. 231–48. References are to de Goeje unless otherwise stated.
[59] On historical geography, e.g.: J. Marquart, *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge. Ethnologische und historisch-topographische Studien zur Geschichte des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts, ca. 840–940* (Leipzig, 1903), p. 508; V. Minorsky (tr. and comm.), *Ḥudūd al-'Ālam: The Regions of the World: a Persian Geography, 372 AH – 982 AD,* 2nd edn. (2 vols., London, 1970), ii, pp. 395, 398, 404, 408–9, 421–2, 447, 449, 455–6; V. Minorsky (ed.), *A History of Sharvān and Darband in the 10th – 11th centuries* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 4, 75–128; for narrative history, e.g.: M.I. Artamonov, *Istoriia khazar* [1962], 2nd edn. (St. Petersburg, 2002), pp. 218–71; D.M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (Princeton, 1954), pp. 41–87.
[60] This will change in the near future, following the recent completion of a doctoral thesis on the *Futūḥ al-buldān* by Ryan Lynch (University of Oxford). My thanks to Ryan for discussing his research with me.
[61] A. Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study,* 2nd edn. with L. I. Conrad (Princeton, 1994), pp. 1–25.

literature for accounts of the wars between the Muslims and the Khazars to generate a narrative of the 'world-historical significance' of the Khazars in blocking Muslim expansionism into Eastern Europe.[62] Such modern accounts often underestimate the unreliability of al-Balādhurī's source material for the early conquest period, and they also miss the ambivalence of al-Balādhurī's own approach to expansion on the northern frontier. The following section will attempt to restore the chapter on Armīnīya to its proper context, revealing it to be a much richer source for how a senior 'Abbāsid administrator, who never visited the North Caucasus in person but gathered detailed reports from the inhabitants of the region, appraised its strategic and economic significance at an important turning point in the mid-ninth century.

2.2 Court culture and the political economy of the hinterland

Al-Balādhurī provides a view of the North Caucasus from the centre of the 'Abbāsid administration, and its court culture. He was 'one of the people of Baghdad', from a bureaucratic background (his grandfather a secretary (*kātib*) in Egypt), and with a reputation as a poet: his works included a translation of the Testament of Ardashīr (the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, d. 292 CE), from Persian into Arabic poetry.[63] Al-Balādhurī's conversance with Persian reflected

[62] The Khazars feature in this strangely persistent schema as Eastern European counterparts to Charles Martel in the West: Artamanov, *Istoriia khazar*, pp. 224–5; P.B. Golden, 'The peoples of the south Russian steppes', in D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia,* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 265; id., *Khazar Studies: An Historico-Philological Inquiry into the Origins of the Khazars*, (2 vol., Budapest, 1980), i, p. 14; Dunlop, *Jewish Khazars*, pp. ix–x, 87; Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 18 n. 2; first critiqued in the Russian scholarship 25 years ago: A.P. Novosel'tsev, *Khazarskoe gosudarstvo i ego rol' v istorii Vostochnoi Evropy i Kavkaza* (Moscow, 1990), pp. 60–2; D. Wasserstein also critiques the *Drang nach Westen* idea in his: 'The Khazars and the World of Islam', in P.B. Golden, H. Ben-Shammai, A. Róna-Tas (eds.), *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 377–8. The Charles Martel trope, deriving from Edward Gibbon, reveals more about modern constructions of European (and North American) identity than about early Islamic expansionism: E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J.B. Bury (7 vols., London, 1898), vi, p. 15.

[63] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel (2 vols., Leipzig, 1872), p. 113; tr. B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: a Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim culture,* (2 vols., New York, 1970), i, pp. 247–8; an Arabic (prose) translation of the 'Testament of Ardashīr', whose Pahlavi prototype may have dated from the time following the deposition of Khosrow II, is preserved in the MS Köprülu 1608 in Istanbul: M. Grinaschi, 'Quelques specimens de la littérature sassanide conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Istanbul', *JA* 254 (1966),

the administrative culture in which operated, rather necessarily indicating Persian origins himself.[64] At the court of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–47/847–61), he was a *nadīm* (court companion), an *adīb*, a *shā'ir* (poet) and responsible for checking the quality of books on financial administration by other secretaries.[65] The roles of administrator and *littérateur* were linked: al-Balādhurī made practical use of Sasanian administrative documents, and translated them into poetry too.[66] He displayed his proximity to power in *Futūḥ al-buldān* by reporting a tradition, transmitted to him directly by the caliph al-Mutawakkil.[67] Following the murder of the latter, al-Balādhurī's position became less secure. Ibn Khallikān transmits part of a eulogy written by al-Balādhurī for the caliph al-Mustā'in (r. 248–52/862–6): the caliph rewarded al-Balādhurī with 7,000 dinars but warned him to save them, as his income could not be guaranteed once the caliph was dead.[68] Al-Balādhurī probably began composing the *Futūḥ al-buldān* under al-Mustā'in, in uncertain times for himself and the entire administration, while the last sections were written in the caliphate of al-Mu'tazz (r. 252–5/866–9).[69]

On the surface, the *Futūḥ al-buldān* seems to show few signs of the serious crisis facing the central 'Abbāsid state by the 860s, including its weakening grip on the Caucasus in particular.[70] In this respect, the outward-looking *Futūḥ* is very unlike al-Balādhurī's later *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, which, with its focus on Arab tribal history, was 'a work of nostalgia'.[71] The curious conclusion to the

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pp. 2–3, 46–67 (edition), 68–90 (translation and commentary); on al-Balādhurī as a transmitter and composer of poetry, see: al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. Kh. Athamina (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 11–12

[64] 'Al-Balādhurī', *EI*^{2}, i, pp. 971–2.

[65] Yāqūt, *Irshād*, ii, pp. 127, 128, 131.

[66] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist,* p. 113; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 300–301; W. al-Qāḍī, 'The Names of Estates in State Registers Before and After the Arabization of the "Dīwāns"', in A. Borrut and P. Cobb (eds.), *Umayyad Legacies. Medieval Memories from Syria to Spain* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 255–80.

[67] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 146.

[68] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-'ayān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (13 vols., Göttingen, 1840), ix, p. 142; cf. Yāqūt, *Irshād*, ii, pp. 127, 128, 131.

[69] De Goeje introduction to al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 13; references to al-Mustā'in and al-Mu'tazz in al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 235, 314.

[70] On the 'Anarchy of Sāmarrā': H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 2nd edn. (Harlow, 2004), pp. 167–73.

[71] L. I. Conrad, [Review of al-Balādhurī: *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ii, ed. W. Madelung (Beirut, 2003), iv, part 2, ed. 'A. Dūrī, 'I. 'Uqla (Beirut, 2001), vii, part 2, ed. M. al-Ya'alawī (Beiruit, 2002)], *Der Islam*, 82:1 (2005), p. 182; I am unable to read Goitein's Hebrew introduction to al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, v, ed. S.D. Goitein (Jerusalem, 1936); but Athamina's introduction to id., vi, part 2, pp. 7–16 is helpful.

chapter on the Caucasus in the *Futūḥ* describes the establishment of an 'unprecedented peace' in the region in 241/855, following campaigns by the Turkish general Bughā al-Kabīr, which culminated in the imprisonment of the Muslim emir of Tiflīs, Isḥāq b. Ismāʿīl, a client (*mawlā*) of the Umayyads.[72] Other sources indicate that Isḥāq had not merely been imprisoned but executed, and that the destruction caused by Bughā to Tiflīs, one of the major Muslim centres in the Caucasus, had been devastating. Bughā had also suffered a humiliating defeat by the Canarkʿ, inhabitants of the region to the south of the Darial Pass. Al-Masʿūdī, writing ca. 332/943, regarded the 'Abbāsids' removal of Isḥāq b. Ismāʿīl as having ended effective Muslim control in the region.[73] The same period had seen the governors of Bāb al-Abwāb and Shirwān in the north-east Caucasus begin to administer their provinces independently (*istabadda*) from the 'Abbāsid central administration.[74] It is unclear whether al-Balādhurī really believed that Bughā had 'solved' the problem of the Caucasus, whether he was deliberately covering up a disastrous policy by al-Mutawakkil's administration in which he was himself implicated, or whether his comment was in fact an ironic, veiled criticism of Bughā's actions. In any case, the crisis in the Caucasus heightened the need for the central administration to reassert its claims on the region.

In the *Futūḥ al-buldān* as whole, al-Balādhurī was more concerned with practical questions about sources of revenue and issues of land ownership, than with heroic tales of Muslim conquest. As Hugh Kennedy recently pointed out, the word *futūḥ* (literally, 'opening up') can convey the sense of 'exploitation' as well as 'conquest'.[75] The work might be seen as political economy of empire, reflecting regional variation while maintaining a relentless focus on property rights, tax revenues, and available resources. Chapters on taxation, stipends, seals, coinage and literacy complement material organised geographically earlier in the book.[76] The text starts from the sacred geography

[72] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 212.
[73] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, ii, pp. 65–6.
[74] *History of Sharvān and Darband*, ed. V. Minorsky (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 4, 17.
[75] At a workshop on al-Balādhurī held in Oxford on 31 May 2016.
[76] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 447–74; their presentation as appendices in the English translation is unhelpful: tr. Murgotten, ii, pp. 237–74.

of the Arabian Ḥijāz, with the *hijra* (emigration) of the Prophet from Mecca to Yathrib (Medina), and then proceeds outwards: north from through Arabia, Syria and Mesopotamia to the Caucasus; west through Egypt and North Africa to Spain; south to the Sudan; and then east through Iran and to the Indus valley. A religious narrative of salvation underlies this, but it is built up from accounts of legal rulings about specific areas of land, trees, water and mines. It is also an imperial geography, incorporating the administrative structures of the Byzantine and Sasanian states: an account of the 'transfer of the Byzantine state registers' (*nuql diwān al-rūmī)* is given between the chapters on Armīniya and Egypt; the 'transfer of the Persian state registers' (*nuql diwān al-fārisiya)* is discussed immediately after the account of the establishment of new caliphal residences at Baghdad, Sāmarrā' and al-Mutawakkilīya.[77] The word *diwān* referred both to the documents and the personnel involved in the change, and *nuql* both to the physical transfer and translation from Greek and Persian.[78]

The creation of the 'Abbāsid imperial core is presented as the transformation of an ancient landscape ('Baghdad was an ancient city'), through colonisation, building and the transfer of state treasuries (*buyūt al-māl*), stores (*al-khazā'in*) and registers.[79] The core is constantly linked to the peripheries in the text through descriptions of the sending out and return to the site of authority: a typical pattern for individual chapters involves the appointment of a commander to go out and gain the submission of a particular territory, and his return once the task has been completed. The chapter on Armīniya includes several examples, ending with the return of Bughā al-Kabīr to Sāmarrā' in 241/855.[80] The pattern reinforces the centrality of caliphal authority, which is in turn linked through the sacred geography of the Ḥijāz to the authority of the Prophet: the account of al-Manṣūr's building of a new city at Baghdad, renamed Madīnat al-Salām ('the City of Peace'),

[77] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 193, 294–301.
[78] Al-Qāḍī, 'Arabization', p.251 n.1 for bibliography.
[79] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 294–5.
[80] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 212.

echoing the renaming of Yathrib to Medina (simply, 'the City'), culminates in his *hājj* to Mecca, and the site of his burial there.[81]

The overall patterning of the work is accompanied by the diversity between individual sections. The diversity reflected the regional variation of the 'Abbāsid caliphate itself, and the different ways in which political power operated in, and how resources were extracted from, its core and peripheral regions. The invocation of historical precedent served purposes specific to the administrative problems of the regions in question. For the most part, Islamic history provides the framework, but in certain cases, earlier figures can be called upon. In a section on the marshland of Iraq (al-Baṭā'iḥ), al-Balādhurī moves swiftly from an eschatological image (the prophecy that the fall of the Sasanian empire would be accompanied by earthquakes and floods), to a concrete discussion of drainage and land reclamation: energetic action by a ruler such as Khosrow I Anushirwān (r. 531–79) could turn the area into highly fertile and productive land; political turmoil and underinvestment by the class of Persian *dihqāns* would lead to flooding and disaster. The section culminates with the 'Abbāsid-era transformation into caliphal estates (*ḍiyā' al-khilāfa*) of the extensive private holdings in the former marshes that had been amassed by the half-brother of the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd, Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik, through massive investment, labour recruitment and incorporation of neighbouring holdings.[82] On the North Caucasian periphery, the ecological and political conditions were different: this time, the example of Khosrow I Anūshirwān is invoked in relation to his regulation of relations with the highlanders and the nomadic Turk empire of the steppes; it is accompanied with a similar warning about the consequence of the weakening of central authority. However, once again we find details of Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik's private landholdings and their later transfer to the state; in this case it

[81] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 295.
[82] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 292–4; see: H. Kennedy, 'The Feeding of the Five Hundred Thousand: Cities and Agriculture in Early Islamic Mesopotamia', *Iraq*, 73 (2011), pp. 178–9.

is their relationship to the economy of the mountains and the frontier city of Bāb al-Abwāb that is relevant.[83]

Al-Balādhurī's view of the Caucasian periphery and its hinterland was metropolitan, but he drew his material from informants within the region itself.[84] This is in contrast, for example, with his approach to Egypt, where he relied largely upon non-Egyptian intermediaries.[85] He refers collectively to the elders of Qālīqalā, Dabīl and Bardha'a (see Map II). He also refers less specifically to 'scholars on Armenian matters'.[86] Dabīl (Arm. Dwin) and Bardha'a (Arm. Partaw), as the ancient capitals of Armenia and Albania respectively, were the two capitals of the province of Armīniya, both used as seats of its *ostikans*, or governors.[87] Qālīqalā (Arm. Karin; Gk. Theodosioupolis) lay in the Byzantine frontier zone, while Khilāṭ (Arm. Xlat') lay behind it at the north-east of Lake Van, wrested from the Armenian Bagratunis by the Muslim Qaysite emirs in the early ninth century.[88] One of al-Balādhurī's sources from Qālīqalā was its *qādī*, al-'Aṭṭāf b. Sufyān Abū al-Asbagh, who provided information to him in writing. The profession of Muḥammad b. Bishr from Qālīqalā is not specified, but T'ovma Arcruni mentions a Bišr as a city governor in around 855–62.[89] Al-Balādhurī's direct informants lived in the major centres of Muslim administration and settlement in the Caucasus; on occasion, their own informants may be located further towards the northern hinterland, as perhaps in the case of an informant of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl from Bardha'a, Abū Barā' 'Anbasa b. Baḥr al-Armānī, who might be linked with an Albano-

[83] See §2.5 below.
[84] Although he also refers to the Iraqi historian al-Wāqidī, an authority throughout *Futūḥ buldān*, three times in this chapter, including via his own teacher, Muḥammad b. Sa'd, the scribe (*kātib*) of al-Wāqidī (a source of 34 traditions in the *Futūḥ*): al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 199, 205; q.v. Index, ed. Munajjid, iii, p. 594; Yāqūt, *Irshad*, ii, p. 137.
[85] Thanks to Edward Zychowicz-Coghill for this point.
[86] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 193.
[87] A.N. Ter-Ghevondyan, *The Arab Emirates in Bagratid Armenia*, tr. N.G. Garsoïan (Lisbon, 1976), pp. 36–7.
[88] *DAI,* ch. 45, lines 43–175, pp. 206–14; ch. 44, lines 50–4, p. 200; Thomas Artsruni, *History of the House of the Artsrunik'*, tr. R.W. Thomson (Detroit, 1985), p. 184; Ter-Ghevondyan, *Arab Emirates,* pp. 32, 55.
[89] Thomas Artsruni, *History*, tr. Thomson, p. 267; Ter-Ghevondyan, *Arab Emirates,* pp. 32, 55.

Armenian family which controlled Qabala (Arm. K'apalak), an ancient capital of Caucasian Albania.[90]

Al-Balādhurī claims to reproduce the text of three treaties for the Caucasus: one with the people of Dabīl, and two with people of Tiflīs.[91] While the treaty given for Dabīl appears to be a formulaic reconstruction, even the most stringent source-critics have argued for the authenticity of the first Tiflīs treaty.[92] It is intriguing that Tiflīs is also one major Muslim settlement from which al-Balādhurī does not appear to have had any local informants (unlike Dabīl). The hostile relations between the Muslim population of Tiflīs and the central 'Abbāsid state, both before and after Bughā's campaign may explain why al-Balādhurī was unable to find local informants. It may also explain why he went to particular efforts to find (or fabricate) an authentic (or especially plausible) document regarding its original submission. Tiflīs provided a crucial point of access to the North Caucasian hinterland and the central Caucasus passes, analogous to the role played by Bāb al-Abwāb in the north-east. Both had slipped out of 'Abbāsid control by the time al-Balādhurī was compiling his text.

2.3 The reproduction of imperial space: Roman and Sasanian legacies

The importance of both Tiflīs and Bāb al-Abwāb to al-Balādhurī's conception of the imperial geography of the Caucasus emerges clearly from the unusually extended passage on pre-Islamic history with which the chapter begins. The section describes the formation of a northern frontier region by the Sasanians through building projects, colonisation and the establishment tributary

[90] Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 83 n. 2 implies Abū Barā' Anbasa b. Baḥr was an ancestor of the ruler of Qabala in al-Mas'ūdī's time, 'Anbasa al-A'war (the 'One-eyed'), whose son, 'Abd al-Barr, lost Qabala to the Shārvānshāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad in 371/981: al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, p. 68; *Ta'rīkh al-bāb*, pp. 7–8; Laurent/Canard, *L'Arménie*, pp. 555, 575; Artamanov, *Istoriia Khazar*, pp. 126–7; A. E. Krymskii, 'Stranitsy iz istorii severnogo ili kavkazkogo Azerbaidzhana (klassicheskoi Albanii)', *Sergeiu Federovichu Ol'denburgu: k piatidesiatiletiiu nauchno-obshchestvennoi deiatel'nosti, 1882 – 1932: sbornik statei* (Leningrad, 1934), p. 295.

[91] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 193, 198, 199, 201, 203, 210; cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, i, p. 2675.

[92] Noth, *Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, pp. 63–76.

relations with the highlanders in the north Caucasian hinterland. It maps an alternative geography of Roman/Byzantine and Turkic/Khazar control, and warns of the threat to the imperial core that could be posed by rival imperial powers, especially if strong central government was weakened. The chapter is preceded by the account of the 'transfer/translation of the Byzantine *dīwān*'. Zadeh's argument that translation, both in the narrow linguistic and the wider cultural sense of the word, necessarily occurred both at the core and the periphery of the 'Abbāsid caliphate is neatly confirmed by the parallelism between the two accounts of the *nuql al-dīwān*. The account of the transfer/translation of the Persian *dīwān* is associated with the appropriation and transformation of the core territory of the Sasanian state (through building, colonisation and land reclamation), while that of the Byzantine *dīwān* with the appropriation and transformation of the Caucasian frontier.

The section opens with a curious attempt to map different, and essentially incompatible, pre-Islamic administrative and political divisions of the Caucasus on to each other. The expansive sense in which the term Armīniya is used for the heading of the chapter as a whole, and in the initial account of the divisions of the Caucasus, embraced almost the entirety of the Caucasus region south of the Main Caucasus Range. This usage is at odds with the Hellenistic tradition, which distinguished Colchis, Iberia and Albania, from Greater and Lesser Armenia, but it has a long tradition in the Near East, going back to the Achaemenid designation of Armina.[93] At the same time, Roman administrative tradition appears to be invoked in the division of Armīniya into provinces numbered one to four.

[93] S. Rapp Jr., *The Sasanian World Through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature* (Farnham, 2014), p. 26.

Table 2.1: Divisions of Armenia according to Roman/Byzantine and Armenian sources. Source: Hewsen 1992, p. 25.

Date	Roman/Byzantine Name	Armenian Name	Region
387 – 536 CE	First Armenia	First Armenia	Caesarea
	Second Armenia	Third Armenia	Melitene
	First Cappadocia	Second Armenia	Sebastia
	Inner Armenia	Upper Armenia	Theodosioupolis
536-591	Second Armenia	First Armenia	Sebastia
	Third Armenia	Third Armenia	Melitene
	Fourth Armenia	Fourth Armenia	Sophene
	First Armenia	Second Armenia	Caesarea
591 – ca. 640	Second Armenia	Second Armenia	Sebastia
	First Armenia	First Armenia	Melitene
	Fourth Armenia	Fourth Armenia	Sophene
	Cappadocia	Third Armenia	Caesarea

Table 2.2: Divisions of Armīniya according to al-Balādhurī, with corresponding provinces in Ananias of Širak

al-Balādhurī (version 1)	al-Balādhurī (version 2)	Arabic name	Roman/ Byzantine name	Armenian name	Ananias of Širak
Armīniya IV	Armīniya IV	Shimshāṭ	Samosaton Armenias (Mansi, xvii, p. 445) /Asmosaton (*DAI*, 50)	[Šamušat]	[Refers to a different Samosata – cf. p. 52 n. 95]
Armīniya IV	Armīniya III	Qālīqala	Theodosioupolis (*DAI,* 45)	Karnoy K'ałak'	(i) Upper Armenia
Armīniya IV	Armīniya III	Khilāṭ	Khliat (*DAI,* 44)	Xlat'	(iv) Turuberan
Armīniya IV	Armīniya III	Arjīsh	Arzes (*DAI*, 44)	Arčēš	(iv) Turuberan
Armīniya IV	----------	Bajunais	Apakhounēs (*DAI*, 44)	Apahunik'	(iv) Turuberan
Armīniya III	Armīniya II	al-Busfurrajān	Asparoukan/ Vasparaka (*DAI*, 44)	Vasparukan	(viii) Vaspurakan
Armīniya III	Armīniya II	Dabīl	Doubios (Proc., *Wars,* ii.25) /Tibi (*DAI*, 44, 45)	Dwin	(xv) Ayrarat
Armīniya II	Armīniya II	Sirāj Ṭayr	--	Širak	(xv) Ayrarat
Armīniya II	Armīniya II	Baghrawand	Makrabandōn (Men. Pr., fr. 18,6)	Bagrewand	(xv) Ayrarat
Armīniya II	----------	Jurzān	Iberia (*De cerem.* ii.48)	Gugark'	(xiii) Gugark' (and Virk')
Armīniya I	Armīniya I	Al-Sīsajān	Synē (*De cerem.* ii.48)	Siwnik'/ Sisakan	(ix) Siwnik'
Armīniya I	Armīniya I	Arrān	Albania (*De cerem.* ii.48)	Ałuank'	(xii) Utik' (and Ałuank')

Two different versions are given by al-Balādhurī. Neither correspond to the actual historical evolution of Roman designations, or to the native Armenian divisions influenced by them (summarised in table 2.1).[94] Al-Balādhurī's divisions (table 2.2) correspond instead to what the *Geography* of Ananias of Širak' calls 'Greater Armenia', as well as neighbouring territories in Albania, Iberia and Colchis.[95]

In al-Balādhurī's account, the South Caucasus, thus conceived, alternated between Persian hegemony, and division between Roman/Byzantine and Turkic control:

> Jurzān and Arrān were held by the al-Khazar, and the rest of Armīniya was held by al-Rūm, under the governorship of the lord (*ṣaḥib*) of the Armīniyaqus.
>
> […]
>
> Armīniya was held by the Persians until the appearance of Islam, when many settlers (*siyāsijūn/*nishastagan*) abandoned their forts and cities, which fell into ruins. Al-Khazar and al-Rūm took possession of what was once theirs.[96]

The Armīniyaqus is transposed both geographically and chronologically, apparently reflecting the subsequent creation of the theme of the *Armeniakōn* in Anatolia, named after Armenians who resettled there. The term first reappears in al-Balādhurī's report of a tradition about the origins of the Arabic name of Qālīqalā, according to which it derived from Qālī, the wife and successor of a Roman prince who ruled (*malaka*) Armīniyaqus.[97] Theodosioupolis had been the seat of the *magister militum per Armeniam*, from the time of Justinian's first major reorganisation of Roman Armenia in 528 CE, but this was a central appointment, and certainly not heritable by a woman.[98]

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[94] R.H. Hewsen, *The Geography of Ananias of Širak: (Ašxarhac'oyc'): the Long and the Short Recensions* (Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 16–27; Laurent/Canard, *L'Arménie*, pp. 39–45.

[95] Ananias of Širak, *Geography*, tr. Hewsen, pp. 59–70; Hewsen dates the Long and Short Recensions to between 591 and 636 CE, and between 636 and the turn of the eighth century, respectively: pp. 32–5. Ananias of Širak, *Geography*, tr. Hewsen, pp. 70, 221 n. 9 refers to Samosata (Flavia) (Arm. *Šamušat*, Ar. *Sumaysāṭ*) the capital of Commagene, between the Taurus and the Euphrates; al-Balādhurī is referring to another city, on the river Murat, east of Melitene: Whittow, *Making,* p. 417 n. 6 and Map XIV p. 313; *Vita Basilii*, 39, ed. Ševčenko, p. 142; Genesios, *Regum libri quattuor*, 4.31, ed. Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, p. 82; the Council of Constantinople in 879 was signed by a metropolitan of Samosata Armenias, evidently referring to the latter: Mansi, xvii, p. 445; E. Honigman, *Die Ostgrenze des Byzantinischen Reiches* (Brussels, 1935), p. 78.

[96] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 194, 197; on the reading of the name for the settlers, see below.

[97] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 197.

[98] G. Greatrex, S.N.C. Lieu (eds.), *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, AD 363–628* (2 vols., London, 2002), ii, pp. 83–4.

Al-Balādhurī weaves what is evidently a local folk derivation from his sources in Qālīqalā (and for whom the original historical context may not have been important), into a wider point about the collapse of central power: the Roman elite had become like the *mulūk al-ṭawā'if,* a term used, often with derogatory associations, for the Arsacid rulers of pre-Sasanian Armenia.[99] The anachronistic uses of 'Armīniyaqus' in these contexts makes clear why the third use, for a Byzantine general, '*baṭrīq al-Armīniyaqus*', fighting the Muslim armies in the mid-seventh century, cannot be taken as evidence for the existence of a theme of the *Armeniakōn* at this early stage.[100]

The indeterminacy in al-Balādhurī's borrowing of Byzantine administrative terminology is matched by his terms for the Turkic hegemons of the steppe to the north of the Caucasus. Modern historians are themselves not agreed about the exact period when the Khazars emerged, either as a sub-grouping within the Western Turk Qaghanate or, following the splintering of the latter in the seventh century, as a significant power in their own right.[101] Ninth- and tenth-century Islamic historians and geographers reveal a general awareness of 'Turk' as a more expansive designation, and 'Khazar' as a term for a confederation that controlled an area from at least the Lower Volga to the Lower Don in their own time.[102] Al-Balādhurī's presentation of al-Rūm and al-Khazar carving up the Caucasus on the eve of the Muslim conquests clearly echoes Heraclius's alliance with the Turks in the 620s: the *History of the Ałuank* provides a dramatic narrative of the

[99] 'The image of the period of the *mulūk al-ṭawā'if* as a time of anarchy and cultural decay seems to be late Sasanian propaganda': M. Morony, 'Mulūk al-ṭawā'if', *EI²,* vii, pp. 551–2.
[100] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 197. Against W. Kaegi Jr., 'Al-Baladhuri and the Armeniac Theme', *Byzantion* 38 (1968), pp. 273–7 and I. Shahid, 'Heraclius and the Unfinished Themes of Oriens: Some Final Observations', *Byzantion* 64 (1994), pp. 365–6; see: J. Haldon, 'Seventh-Century Continuities: the *Ajnād* and the "Thematic Myth"', in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East,* iii, pp. 379–42, esp. p. 421 n.67; R.-J. Lilie, 'Araber und Themen. Zum Einfluß der arabischer Expansion auf die byzantinische Militärorganisation', in ib., pp. 425–60.
[101] C. Zuckerman, 'The Khazars and Byzantium – The First Encounter', in *World of the Khazars,* pp. 399–432; Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 58–67; Tang dynastic histories and the *History of the Caucasian Albanians* both refer to major upheavals on the eastern steppes in around 630: Movsēs Dasxuranci, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, ii, ch. 16, tr. C. Dowsett (Oxford, 1961), p.106; T. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 143 –5.
[102] T. M. Kalinina, '*Al-turk* i *at-turk* v proizvedeniiakh srednevekovykh arabo-persidskikh uchenykh', *Khazary. Evrei i slaviane*, 16 (2005), pp. 251–8.

meeting of Heraclius with the Turks at Tiflīs, capital of Iberia (al-Jurzān), as well as details about the Turks taking over the Sasanian fiscal structures in Albania (al-Arrān).[103] Al-Balādhurī's use of the term 'al-Khazar' cannot be used as a reliable indication of the identity of Heraclius's northern allies, but it links his narrative directly to concerns about the Muslims' powerful northern neighbour in the Caucasus nearer to his own time.

Al-Balādhurī presented the Sasanian reinforcement of the frontier region against the threat from the north as central to the defence of the imperial core. The initiatives taken by Kawādh I (r. 488–96, 498–531), are reported as a direct response to raids of 'al-Khazar', which 'sometimes reached as far as Dīnawar'.[104] Later in the chapter, he describes a major invasion by al-Khazar which reached Northern Iran in the Umayyad period, which he implies was worsened by rivalry between the Muslim commanders.[105] The implication of al-Balādhurī's presentation of the northern frontier was made explicit by al-Mas'ūdī in his *Murūj al-dhahab*, where he thanks God that the Sasanians had founded the city of Bāb al-Abwāb, built walls and fortresses in the Caucasus, established colonies and client kings. If they had not, al-Mas'ūdī has no doubt that the rulers of the Khazars, the Alans, the Sarīr and other nations of the Caucasus would have been able to sweep into Dīnawar and beyond into Iraq. This was all the more important in his own time, the year 332/943–4, when 'the power of Islam had declined', the Byzantines were on the offensive and Muslim elites had themselves become like the *mulūk al-ṭawā'if.*[106]

Al-Balādhurī's account of Sasanian frontier arrangements does not emphasise military confrontations, but instead building projects, alongside colonisation and the establishment of relations with the highlanders. The place names mentioned are almost all picked up again in the *futūḥ* narratives that follow (cf. Map III). The geography of the frontier is mapped out in three

[103] Movsēs Dasxuranci, *History*, ii. ch. 11, 16, tr. Dowsett, pp. 85–6, 106; while Movsēs Dasxuranci was writing in the tenth century, James Howard-Johnston has argued that the passage in question was probably composed in the 670s: *Witnesses,* p. 108.
[104] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 194.
[105] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 206–7; see §2.5 below.
[106] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, pp. 72–4.

lists: the building projects attributed to Kawādh I (table 2.3), the building projects attributed to Khosrow I (table 2.4), and the peoples of the southern and northern slopes of the Caucasus mountains (*jabal al-Qabq*), whose leaders Khosrow I made kings (*mulūk*) and *shāhs* (table 2.5).

Table 2.3: The building projects attributed by al-Balādhurī to Kawādh I, with later references

Place-name	Later references
madīnat al-Baylaqān	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa (p. 203) - rebuilt by ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz b. Ḥātim (p. 205) - winter encampment of al-Jarrāh's army (p. 206) - revolt of Qadad b. Aṣfar al-Baylaqānī defeated by ʻAbbāsid general (p. 209) - Nahr al-Ḥasan in Baylaqān named after general who defeated Mušeł Mamikonian (p. 210)
madīnat al-Bardhaʿa	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa and transplantation of merchants by Bughā (p. 203) - residence of governor Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān al-ʻAbsi (p. 204) - repaired by ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz b. Ḥātim or Muḥammad b. Marwān or ʻAbd al-Malik – variant traditions (p. 205) - weights and measures established by al-Jarrāḥ; winter campaign (p. 206) - distances measured from (p. 207) - traditionists from (p. 210)
madīnat al-Qabala	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa (p. 203)
sudd al-L.b.n	---
Bāb al-Lān	- building projects of Khosrow (p. 195) - allies of the *baṭrīq Armīniyaqus* (p. 197) - campaigns of Ḥabīb b. Maslama (p. 203)* [*There are variant readings: MS BL Add. 23264 fo. 44 obv. gives Bāb al-Lān, but the Leiden MS gives Bāb al-Lāl; Munajjid (ed.) *Futūḥ*, i, p. 239 gives Bāb al-Lāl.]
360 towns	'later abandoned' (p. 194)

In his first list (table 2.3), al-Balādhurī describes the establishment of urban centres (*madīna,* pl. *madā'in*) north of the Araxes river (Baylaqān), and then up the Kur river, with the 'capital of the whole frontier' at Bardhaʿa. The same formulation is used for Bardhaʿa under Muslim rule.[107] The town of Qabala 'which is Khazar' (*wa huwa al-khazar*) is on the other side of the Kur, on a tributary flowing down from the southern spur of the main Caucasus range. The Azerbaijani

[107] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p.204; tr.1, p.320.

historian Buniiatov argued al-Balādhurī's description of Qabala as a Khazar city indicates a longer presence of the Khazars south of the Caucasus in the seventh century than is generally admitted.[108] However, it may actually reflect the presence of northern pastoralists in the Kur valley much closer to al-Balādhurī's own time.[109] The meaning of the *Sudd al-L.b.n* is obscure: Hitti reads it as *sudd al-libn*, or brick rampart ('dam' in his version), while Minorsky suggests this is the *Lip'in* of Armenian sources or the *Lupenii* of Pliny.[110] The sense that al-Balādhurī conveys is simply that a very large series of settlements was constructed along the Kur, from the Shirwān plain up north-west towards the Darial pass (Bāb al-Lān) in the central Caucasus. The number of 360 cities makes the report feel fanciful, but real features of the landscape's evolution, at least as it appeared to al-Balādhurī's informants from Bardha'a, may be reflected here. Both the existence of multiple lines of defence, and the abandonment of fortified settlements further south during the course of the late Sasanian period, are archaeologically attested.[111] The nature of the frontier as a layered zone of contact between settlers, border troops, highlanders and northern pastoralists, rather than a simple barrier, is an important feature of al-Balādhurī's conception of the historical geography of the region.

[108] Z.M. Buniiatov, *Izbrannye sochineniia v 3-kh tomakh*, 1 (Baku, 1999), pp. 77–9.
[109] See §2.6 below.
[110] Hitti (tr.), *Futūḥ,* p. 306; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, vi, ch. 11, ed. W. Jones (London, 1938–63), p. 358; Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p.12 n. 1; in turn, he links these via metathesis with the *Fīlān* (see below): ib., p. 101 n. 1.
[111] J. Howard-Johnston, 'The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison', in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East,* iii, pp. 180–96; id., 'The Late Sasanian Army', in T. Bernheimer and A. Silverstein (eds.), *Late Antiquity: Eastern Perspectives* (Warminster, 2012), p. 100; M.S. Gadzhiev, 'Dag-bary – Velikaia Kavkazskaia Stena', *Dagestanskie sviatyni* (2008), pp. 8–36; K. Alizadeh and A. Jason, 'Formation and Destruction of Pastoral and Irrigation Landscapes on the Mughan Steppe, North-Western Iran', *Antiquity*, 81 (2007), pp. 148–160; see §2.6 below.

Table 2.4: The building projects attributed by al-Balādhurī to Khosrow I, with later references

Place-name	Later references
madīnat al-Shābarān	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa (p. 204) - settlement of Khazars by Marwān b. Muḥammad (p. 208)
madīnat Masqat	- Khosrow I's king making (p. 196) - campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa (p. 207) - Maslama's convocation of local elites (p. 208)
madīnat al-Bāb wa'l-Abwāb	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa (p. 204) - garrisoned with Syrians by Maslama (p. 207) - campaign of Marwān and the provisioning of the city (pp. 207–9) - Musāfir al-Qassāb, Khārijī rebel in Bāb (p. 209)
In Arrān: Abwāb Shakkan	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa (p. 203) - winter quarters of al-Jarrāḥ (p. 206)
(Abwāb) al-Qambirān	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa (p. 203)
Abwāb al-Dūdānīya	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʿa (p. 203)
(Abwāb) al-Durdhūkīya	- campaigns of Ḥabīb b. Maslama (p. 203) - campaigns of Marwān b. Muḥammad (p. 209)
In Jurzān: madīnat Sughdabīl	-------
qaṣr Bāb Fayrūziqubādh	-------
qaṣr Bāb Lādhiqa	-------
qaṣr Bāb Bāriqa	-------
Bāb al-Lān	Cf. table 2.3
Bāb Samsakhī	- campaigns of Ḥabīb b. Maslama (p. 202)
qalʿat al-Jardamān	- campaigns of Ḥabīb b. Maslama (p. 202)
qalʿat Samshuldī	
In Armīniya (in the narrow sense): madīnat Dabīl, madīnat al-Nashawā, ḥiṣn Wayṣ, a castle (*qalʿa*) in Sīsajān	All mentioned at least once elsewhere in the chapter (but outside the scope of the present discussion).

The exposition of Khosrow's building projects (table 2.4) takes us beyond the Kur valley: Shābarān was located on the river of the same name on the north side of the southern spur of the main Caucasus range, and would in later periods fall into the orbit of Bāb al-Abwāb rather than Arrān.[112] Masqat was located on the river Samur, further north and closer still to Bāb, perhaps in the vicinity of the modern Mushkur.[113] Al-Balādhurī makes clear the territories that needed to be

[112] Minorksy, *History of Sharvān,* p. 27; Laurent/Canard, *L'Arménie*, p. 493.
[113] *Mazskʿutʿan* usually identified with the *Massagetai:* Ananias of Širak*, Geography*, tr. Hewsen, pp. 57, 121-2; on the connection between Masqat and al-Bāb: al-Masʿūdī*, Murūj,* i, p. 242; Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, pp. 77–9.

controlled in order to hold Bāb al-Abwāb. The survey of settlements then progresses along territories north of the Kur to the west of Qabala: to Shakkī (Shak'ē) and Qambīrān (Kambich'an) on the river Iori, between the Kur and the Alazān.[114] Still further into the mountains to the north and west are the Didos, on the Andi-Qoy Su river in Dagestan and the Durjuqs in the upper Assa river in Ingushetia.[115] The geographical logic then shifts, with settlements in Jurzān radiating out from Tiflīs (Sughdabīl): towards Lazika in the west, the Alan Gates in the north, and then back in towards Tiflīs with Samts'khe, Gardaban and Samshwilde.[116]

The terminology used for settlements varies according to the region: *madīna* (town/city) is used for Darband and the associated Shābarān and Masqat; *bāb,* pl. *abwāb* (gate) is used for settlements closer to the north Caucasian mountain passes, with the name of tribes associated; *qaṣr*, pl. *quṣūr* (fortress) is used for a series of fortified settlements that al-Balādhurī tells us were taken over from the Romans on the borders of Lazika, opening access towards the Black Sea coast (*Baḥr Ṭarābazunda*: 'the Sea of Trebizond'); *qala'a* (castle) is used for fortifications in the Iberian and Armenian highlands.[117] Al-Balādhurī emphasises that the building projects were accompanied with a policy of colonisation and that one of the indications of the collapse of Persian rule in the Caucasus was the colonists' flight.[118] Both De Goeje and Munajjid's editions give the name for

[114] Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, pp. 83–4; id, 'Caucasica IV', *BSOAS*, 15:3 (1953), pp. 505-14; Laurent/Canard, *L'Arménie*, p. 568.
[115] The *Didok'* and *Durckk'* of Ananias of Širak, *Geography,* tr. Hewsen, pp.57, 117–18, maps VI, VII. Al-Mas'ūdī described *al-Dūdānīya* as a pagan tribe (*jāhilīy*a) that did not accept the authority of the Shirwānshāhs: *Murūj*, i, p. 211; Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 107 n.4; Laurent/Canard, *L'Arménie*, p. 568. An attempt to identify early medieval Dido material culture: D.M. Ataev, 'Arkheologicheskie issledovaniia v gornom Dagestane osen'iu 1962 g.', *Materialy po arkheologii Dagestana*, 3, (Makhachkala, 1973), pp. 56–7.
[116] The 'place of lamentations', *Sagodebeli*, in Georgian, is in Tiflis. Al-Balādhurī's identification of the settlers of Tiflis as Sogdians may be based on a false derivation from this, although it is entirely impossible that Sogdians were among the settlers: Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 25 n. 1; É. de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders: A History,* tr. J. Ward (Leiden, 2005), pp. 241–2. On these areas of the "Armeno-Georgian marchlands", C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Georgetown, 1963), q.v. index: 'Gardabani', 'Samts'khe', 'Samshvilde', 'Upper Iberia', and map.
[117] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 195: possibly the Lower Chorokh: Laurent/Canard, *L'Arménie*, p.569.
[118] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 194, 195, 197.

these colonists as *siyāsij[ūn],* but Ryan Lynch argues on the basis of the manuscript tradition that the original text used the Middle Persian term **nishastagan*, meaning simply 'colonists'.[119]

Table 2.5: The peoples whose leaders Khosrow I made 'kings and shāhs', with later references

Name	Later references
khāqān al-Jabal / ṣāḥib al-Sarīr / Wahrāzānshāh	- campaign of Marwān and the provisioning of Bāb (p. 208)
malik Fīlān / Fīlānshāh	- Maslama's convocation of local elites (p. 207) - campaign of Marwān and the provisioning of Bāb (p. 209)
Ṭabarsarānshāh	- Maslama's convocation of local elites (p. 207) - campaign of Marwān and the provisioning of Bāb (p. 208–9)
malik al-Lakz / Jarshānshāh	- campaign of al-Ḥārith b. 'Amr al-Ṭā'ī (p. 206) - Maslama's convocation of local elites (p. 207) - campaigns of Marwān and resettling of Khazars (p. 208) - chief killed by a shepherd; provisioning of Bāb (p. 209)
malik Masqat	Cf. table 2.4
malik Līran / Līrānshāh	- Maslama's convocation of local elites (p. 207)
malik Shirwān / Shirwānshāh	- campaigns of Salmān b. Rabī'a (p. 204) - Maslama's convocation of local elites (p. 207) - provisioning of Bāb (p. 209) - location of naphtha and salt mines; rule by al-Shamākh b. Shujā' during governorship of Sa'īd b. Sālim (p. 210)
ṣāḥib Bukhkh	------
ṣāḥib Zirīkirān	- campaigns of Marwān and provisioning of Bāb (p. 208)

According to al-Balādhurī, Khosrow's frontier policy extended beyond the fortification and settlement of the periphery, and involved the establishment of client relationships with the peoples of the hinterland (table 2.5). With the exception of the mysterious Bukhkh, all of these peoples reappear later in the later narrative of the Muslim reconquest of Bāb al-Abwāb, and its provision.[120] The pre-eminence of the the Sarīr (the Dagestan Avars) among the peoples of the mountains of the north-east Caucasus, indicated by the title given here of 'Qaghan of the Mountain' (*khaqān al-jabal*) corresponds to the leading role played by them in the provisioning of Bāb al-Abwāb under Marwān b. Muḥammad later on, as well as to reports in tenth-century

[119] R. Lynch, personal communication; Munajjid (ed.), *Futūḥ*, pp. 232, 233; Laurent, *L' Arménie*, p. 567; cf. Yāqūt, *Kitāb mu'jam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866), i, p.221 (*al-siyāsījūn)*, p.438 (*al-anashastikūn*); al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, i, p. 243.
[120] See §2.5 below.

writers such as al-Iṣṭakhrī and al-Mas'ūdī.[121] Al-Balādhurī tells us that not all of these kingships survived: that of the Masqat was subsequently abolished (*wa qad baṭalat mamalakatuhu*) and later in the text, the people (*ahl*) and the lord (*ṣāḥib*), but not the king of Masqat are referred to.[122] Al-Balādhurī emphasises that the kings of the Caucasus (*mulūk Jabal al-Qabq*) owed their rule to their relationship to the imperial power, which confirmed their rule (*aqarra*) and granted them a peace treaty on condition of their payment of tribute (*ṣālaḥahum 'ala al-atā'a*).[123]

Al-Balādhurī's conception of Sasanian imperial space explicitly excluded the notion of open-ended expansion. The account of the reinforcement of Bāb al-Abwāb and the projection of Sasanian political influence into the North Caucasian hinterland is preceded by a narrative of a meeting between Khosrow I and the Turk ruler (here he is *malik al-Turk*, rather than al-Khazar) whose result was the establishment of a buffer-zone between the two empires. The toponym for their meeting place, in *al-Barshalīya* (or *Barsilīya*), does not appear elsewhere in the chapter.[124] It is a name which is associated in other places both with early Khazar history and with Alan history, variously located in the North Caucasus and the Middle Volga, but its localisation does not concern al-Balādhurī here.[125] The point of this passage is the account of two tricks played by

[121] Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb masālik wa mamālik*, ed. M. de Goeje (Leiden, 1870), p. 223 and al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, i, p. 228 derive Sarīr ('throne' in Arabic) from a gold throne that allegedly transferred to the North Caucasus after the collapse of the Sasanians; they also report that its rulers claim descent from the Persian ruler Bahram Chubin, or Bahram Gur.
[122] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 196, 204, 207.
[123] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 197.
[124] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 195; tr.1, p307. MS BL Add. 23264 f.44 obv. gives *Barsalī*ya; Munajjid (1956), 1, p.232 gives *Barshalīya*.
[125] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, p. 358 reports that the Khazars originated from *Berzylia,* while the twelfth-century chronicle of Michael the Syrian mentions the Alan land called Bersālia: *Chronique*, ed. and tr. J.-B. Chabot (Paris, 1901), ii, p. 364; cf. *Barṣula*: *Ḥudūd al-'Ālam,* tr. V. Minorsky, '*The Regions of the World': A Persian Geography, 372 A.H. – 982 A.D,* 2nd edn. (London, 1970), p. 467; Minorsky links the reference in the tenth-century Hebrew letter of the Khazar Qaghan Joseph to the summer residence of *V.r.shan* to al-Balādhurī's *Barshalīya* and the residence of the Hunnic chief Alp Iltuver at Varach'an in Movsēs Dasxuranci, which in turn he identifies Bashlï on the river Gumri in Qaytāq territory, north of Derbent: *Evreisko-khazarskaia perepiska v X veke,* ed. and tr. P.K. Kokovtskov (Leningrad, 1932), pp. 85–6; Movsēs Dasxuranci, *History,* ii, ch. 39, 41, 42, tr. Dowsett, pp. 155, 163, 167; Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, pp. 93–5, 103, 106, 166. Golden suggests the name has a Palaeo-Caucasian origin and was subsequently Turkicized: *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 143–7. However, Ananias of Širak mentions an island on the Volga inhabited by the *Baslk'*, while geographers in the al-Jayhānī tradition associate the B.rsūlā with one of the groups of the Volga Bulgars: Ananias of Širak, *Geography,* tr. R. Hewsen, pp. 55, 55A, 114, 123; Ibn Rusta, *Kitāb al-A'lāq al-nafisa,* ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leiden, 1892), p. 141; A.F. Martinez, 'Gardizi's Two Chapters on the Turks', *AEMA*

Khosrow on his counterpart. The meeting is precipitated by Khosrow writing to the Turk ruler with a request for peace, sealed by a marriage alliance. According to al-Balādhurī or his source, Khosrow was disingenuous: he was sent the daughter of the Turk ruler, but sent in return a slave-girl (*ama*) who had been adopted by 'one of his women', pretending that she was his real daughter. The second trick involves Khosrow repeatedly giving orders for setting fire to the Turk camp, and then blaming it on provocations by members of their respective armies, trying to obstruct the peace negotiations for fear of losing booty from the continuing war economy: the only solution, Khosrow persuades the Turk, is for the latter to withdraw entirely from the frontier region, so Khosrow can create a buffer between them.[126]

Al-Balādhurī, like Khosrow, is having his cake and eating it. Al-Balādhurī demonstrates the efficacy of marriage alliances with northern peoples as a diplomatic tool, and shows how they can simultaneously be disavowed should they be perceived as establishing a dangerous precedent. As such, it mirrors a passage in *De administrando imperio*, which provides model excuses in the case of unwanted demands for marriage alliance from northern neighbours.[127] Courtiers such as al-Balādhurī could claim privileged access to sensitive information about the origins and parentage of members of the 'Abbāsid court, and were well placed to disseminate rumours that suited their own careers, or those of their patrons. Al-Balādhurī's story about Khosrow's trick would have been read against a now lost background of gossip within the court, where *kuttāb* and *udabā'* and members of the Turkish military jostled for position.[128]

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2 (1982), p. 157. Zuckerman locates Barsilia at the Samara Elbow on the Middle Volga and dismisses the idea of the Barsilians splitting between the North Caucasus and the Volga: Zuckerman, 'First Encounter', pp. 419–26.

[126] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 195–6.

[127] *DAI*, ch. 13, pp. 72, 74; J. Shepard, 'Information, Disinformation and Delay in Byzantine Diplomacy', *BF* 10 (1985), pp. 239–40; R. Macrides, 'Dynastic Marriages and Political Kinship', in J. Shepard and S. Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy. Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. Cambridge, March 1990* (Ashgate, 1992), pp. 263–80; see §5.5 below.

[128] On gossip at the other end of the social spectrum: C. Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry', *Past and Present*, 160 (1998), pp. 3–24.

Meanwhile, Khosrow's lie about the reason why the Turkish camp kept on catching fire alludes to a real problem in any imperial project. The difficulty of satisfying those who wished to continue to make a living out of raiding, while attempting to stabilise frontiers and cross-frontier exchange, was a serious concern for the 'Abbāsid caliphate in the mid-third/ninth century. Al-Balādhurī provides details elsewhere of al-Mutawakkil's decision in 243/857 to remove tax exemptions originally attached to military settlers in the Syrian *thughūr* in order to avert a fiscal crisis.[129] A figure such as al-Balādhurī may even have been responsible for suggesting such a solution to the caliph. Peter von Sivers has argued the period of 227–65/842–78 was one of transition, where sections of the 'Abbāsid ruling class who derived more of their wealth from commercial interests across the Byzantine frontier (*thughūr*) began to gain the upper hand over a 'military-fiscal wing' of the elite that was more committed to expansion.[130] The different sections of the 'Abbāsid elite were not always distinct, however: the point of Khosrow's second trick is that he is able to hide behind the idea that he is unable to control his army.

2.4 Logics of expansion: the initial conquest period

When turning from describing the pre-Islamic history of the Caucasus to the early conquest period, al-Balādhurī's purpose was both to demonstrate how the caliphate had inherited the imperial legacy of the Sasanians and to adjudicate between competing claims among Muslims about their ancestors' role in the conquests. As Lawrence Conrad has shown, the discontinuity and instability of the initial oral tradition from which many early Islamic conquest narratives were ultimately derived, and the arbitrariness with which the tradition was sometimes elaborated before canonisation by historians such as al-Balādhurī fatally undermines the reliability of at least

[129] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 171.
[130] P. von Sivers, 'Taxes and Trade in the 'Abbāsid Thughūr, 705-962/133-351', *JESHO*, 25:1 (1982), pp. 71–99; cf. the end of Carolingian expansion: T. Reuter, 'Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire', *TRHS* 35 (1985), pp. 75–94; on the inverse problem in tenth-century Byzantium: Whittow, *Making*, pp. 335–6.

some of them.[131] Modern accounts of the 'first Arab-Khazar war', that depend on such material via al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī for accounts of sustained Muslim raiding north of the Cauasus as early as the 640s correspondingly rest on a very shaky evidential base. However, what is significant for our purposes is the way in which al-Balādhurī shaped such material into a wider historical narrative and a wider geographical conception of the Caucasus and its northern hinterland in the Muslim world. As Chase Robinson puts it, there was a difference between a Kufan embellishing 'some family history by crowing (often at the expense of the Basrans) about his heroic participation in a Kufan conquest' and a work of history that integrated reports of Kufan and Basran conquests in a single work: the latter 'is unmistakably imperial in design.'[132]

The narrative of the initial conquests is structured by the campaigns of Ḥabīb b. Maslama al- Fihrī and Salmān b. Rabī'a al-Bāhilī, in which the narrative of Salmān's conflict with the Khazars is subordinated to the narrative of Ḥabīb's conquests.[133] The section begins with Ḥabīb's appointment as commander, his conquest of Qālīqalā, defending it from a Byzantine army reinforced with troops from across the North Caucasus; it concludes, following Salmān's death in the Khazar city of Balanjar, with Ḥabīb's report back to the caliph, and the appointment of Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān al-'Absī as the governor of the frontier fortresses of Armenia.[134] When Ḥudhayfa took up his seat in Bardha'a, we are told that he 'sent his *'āmils* to the places that lay

[131] L.I. Conrad, 'The Conquest of Arwād: a Source-critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East', in A. Cameron and L.I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East,* i, *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, N. J., 1993), pp. 317–401, where his verdict on al-Balādhurī's treatment of the conquest of Arwād is damning. Not all oral traditions of the conquests may have been as disrputed as Conrad's Syrian material, but the factional rivalries shaping the transmission require unpicking: C. Robinson, 'The Conquest of Khūzistān: a Historiographical Reassessment', *BSOAS* 67:1 (2004), pp. 14–39; criteria such as plausibility of narrative details are not sufficient: see M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (London, 1996), p. 85, critique of F.M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981).

[132] C. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 40.

[133] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 197–204.

[134] Balanjar is often identified with the Upper Chir-Iurt fort, on the right bank of the Sulak river in Dagestan: M.G. Magomedov, 'Verkhne-chiriurtovskoe gorodischche', *Uchenye zapiski Instituta istorii, iazyka i literatury im. G. Tsadasy* (1969), pp. 147–67; id., 'Drevnie politicheskie tsentry Dagestana', *SA* (1975) 3, pp. 63–74'; id., *Obrazovanie Khazarskogo kaganata (po materialam arkheologicheskikh issledovanii i pis'mennym dannym* (Moscow, 1983), pp. 28–36; S.A. Pletneva, *Ocherki khazarskoi arkheologii* (Moscow, 2000), pp. 177–205; id., *Kochevniki iuzhno-russkikh stepei v epokhu srednevekov'ia* (Voronezh, 2003), pp. 44–8; Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 221–4.

between it and Qālīqalā and up to Khayzān': from the marches with the Byzantines to the estates (*ḍiyā'*) of Khayzān (Qaytaq/*Khaydāq) on the Darbakh river north of Bāb al-Abwāb: precisely the borders of Sasanian power delimited in the previous section.[135]

A dispute between Ḥabīb and Salmān occurred following the Muslim capture of Qālīqalā from the Byzantines. According to al-Balādhurī's first version of events, Ḥabīb b. Maslama was sent to campaign in the Caucasus, either by Mu'āwiya, viceroy over Syria, Mesopotamia and the *thughūr* (the frontier) on orders from the caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (r. 24–35/644–56), or by the caliph directly. Ḥabīb, with either 6,000 or 8,000 troops, captured Qālīqalā, to which the Byzantines respond by building a coalition including 'troops from al-Lan, Afkhāz and from Samandar in al-Khazar' under the command of the *baṭrīq Armīniyaqus,* later named as al-Mawriyān (Maurianos). Ḥabīb requested reinforcements, and was sent 2,000 men 'eager for *jihād* and booty' by Mu'āwiya from Syria: these were given *qatā'i'* holdings and were stationed as cavalry (*murābita*).[136] These were followed by 6,000 Kūfans sent under the command of Salmān b. Rabī'a on the orders of its governor Sa'īd b. al-'Āṣī. However, the Kūfans arrived after Ḥabīb's army had already defeated and killed al-Mawriyān, and so were refused any of the booty. The caliph 'Uthmān's written verdict on the ensuing dispute was that all the booty belonged to the Syrians. Al-Balādhurī then reports an alternative version, dated to 25/645–6, that Salmān and Ḥabīb's troops were in fact equal in number, and took an equal part in the conquest of many fortresses. A third version, transmitted to al-Balādhurī's teacher Muḥammad b. Sa'd by al-Wāqidī, relates that Ḥabīb defeated and killed al-Mawrīyan at Dwin, rather than Qālīqalā, after which he was joined by Salmān: al-Balādhurī rejects this version.[137]

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[135] *ḍiyā' Khayzān:* see §2.5 below.

[136] The garrison *qatā'i'* is mistranslated by Hitti as a 'fief' (p. 310), confusing it with the later institution of the *iqtā'.* Hugh Kennedy defines these as one-off grants that were alienable, urban and recorded in written deeds (*sijillāt*). They were a special incentive, rather than a substitute for salaries, or a form of conditional land-tenure: H. Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs. Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London, 2001), pp. 81–5; id., 'Feeding the Five Hundred Thousand', pp. 181–2 and nn. 27–8; cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 128, 134, 144, 165-6, 169-70, 187-8.

[137] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 197–9.

Between the other two versions, al-Balādhurī chooses the Syrian version over the Kūfan, on the authority of accounts, 'told to me by many of the elders of the people of Qālīqalā and sent to me in writing by its *qāḍī* (judge), al-'Aṭṭāf b. Sufyān Abū'l-Asbagh'.[138] It is significant that the written authority of a *qāḍī* appears to hold particular weight for al-Balādhurī: in passing, he also implicitly criticises Salmān for serving as *qāḍī* in Kufa for a year without hearing a single case.[139] A local preference for the Syrian narrative among al-Balādhurī's informants in Qālīqalā combined with al-Balādhurī's scepticism regarding Kūfan boasting about their campaigns in the North-East Caucasus. The main narrative that al-Balādhurī presents of Salmān b. Rabī'a's campaigns in Arrān and beyond follows the outcome of the dispute at Qāliqalā, and culminates with Salmān's death in Khazar territory. Al-Balādhurī reveals that he was aware of alternative reports that Salmān had been campaigning in the Caucasus at an earlier stage, but does not elaborate.[140] Al-Ṭabarī transmits traditions which produce a very different picture: Ḥabīb and Salmān were sent on campaign in 22/642–3, with Salmān's brother 'Abd al-Raḥmān in the vanguard, which involved not only the surrender of Bāb al-Abwāb to 'Abd al-Raḥmān by the Persian commander Shahrbarāz, but a successful raid on deep into Khazar territory, to al-Bayḍā' (often identified in modern scholarship with the Khazar capital of Itil).[141] The account includes material directly replicated in al-Ṭabarī under 32/652–3.[142] Meanwhile, the dispute between Salmān and Ḥabīb is variously dated in al-Ṭabarī to 24/644–5 and 32/652–3. While in al-Balādhurī, the first encounter between Muslim armies and peoples from the North Caucasian steppe and highlands occurs in the South Caucasus, in the context of a Byzantine-sponsored invasion; in the traditions reported in al-Ṭabarī, Muslim armies had already conquered Bāb al-Abwāb and had been fighting the

[138] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 198.
[139] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 204.
[140] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 198.
[141] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, i, pp. 2664, 2668. On al-Bayḍā': Artamanov, *Istoriia khazar*, pp. 388, 398; Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 225, 236–7; Dunlop, *History*, p. 51. On Shahrbarāz: J. Banaji, 'On the Identity of Shahrālānyōzān in the Greek and Middle Persian Papyri from Egypt', in A.T. Schubert and P.M. Sijpestejn (eds.), *Documents and the History of the Early Islamic World* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 27–42.
[142] Nonetheless, Dunlop, *History*, pp. 50–1, dismisses Marquart's scepticism about al-Tabarī's narrative: Marquart, *Streifzüge*, p. 491.

Khazars on their own territory, possibly for as long as a decade before the campaign against Maurianos.

The background to the Kūfan claims about early raiding against the Khazars can be traced to the politics of Kūfa itself, and resistance in the highlands of north-western Iran. Martin Hinds argued the Kūfan political alignments of the Khawārij and the Shī'a and the tribal notables (*ashrāf*), which would have such long-running ramifications in later Islamic history, emerged as the result of the stalling of Kūfan territorial expansion. Under 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44), Kūfa had been the site of an experiment in a new form of Islamic social organisation, based upon an egalitarian division of land between the whole of the Muslim community, diminishing the influence of the traditional tribal leadership more characteristic elsewhere.[143] Al-Balādhurī's chapter on the establishment of the *miṣr* of Kūfa opens with a tradition via Muḥammad b. Sa'd that 'Umar ordered for it to be established as '*dār al-ḥijra* (abode of emigration) for the Muslims'.[144] In the absence of new conquests, the pressure on Kūfan territories increased and alternative visions of the correct division of land became highly charged. Successive governors struggled to contain the tensions, and found attempts to secure new territory met with guerrilla campaigns by 'all the multitude of mountain dwellers' in Daylām and Ṭabaristān.[145] In the light of this, Salmān's reckless campaign to the north of the Caucasus might be seen more as a desperate and more or less isolated attempt to find a release for tensions in Kūfa, than a continuation of sustained campaigning in the north.[146]

The non-Muslim sources provide support for the downsizing of the Kūfan narrative. The early ninth-century Byzantine chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor and the seventh-century Armenian history attributed to Sebeos both report the fighting between Ḥabīb b. Maslama and

[143] M. Hinds, 'Kufan Political Alignments and their Background in the mid-Seventh Century A.D.', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4:2 (1971), pp. 346–67.
[144] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 275.
[145] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 279; Ps.-Sebeos, *History*, tr. R.W. Thomson, comm. J. Howard-Johnston and T. Greenwood (2 vols., Liverpool, 1999), i, pp. 148–9..
[146] Hinds, 'Alignments', p. 356.

the Byzantine general Maurianos, both dating it to around 653 CE, although Theophanes reports that the Muslims drove Maurianos to the Caucasus, while according to Pseudo-Sebeos he was driven to Trebizond.[147] Meanwhile, James Howard-Johnston has argued that Pseudo-Sebeos's account of a Muslim campaign to the north in 655 CE provoked by the highlanders of north-west Iran drawing the Muslims onto territory on which they were not equipped to fight might describe the disaster at Balanjar preserved in the Islamic tradition, and dated by al-Ṭabarī to 32/652–3.[148] Al-Balādhurī steers a middle course between the heroic traditions from Kūfa and the chaotic picture that emerges from Pseudo-Sebeos in particular. In his account, the securing of the core frontier territories in the South Caucasus, and the establishment of proper chains of authority take priority over adventurist exploits far beyond the frontier. At the same time, his presentation of Salmān's campaigns progressing steadily towards Bāb al-Abwāb creates the impression of territorial coherence for Muslim control of the Caucasus that appears to be quite at odds with the actual situation at this early stage.

2.5 Construction of the Umayyad North

The territorial coherence that al-Balādhurī projects back onto the earliest Muslim presence in the Caucasus may in fact reflect an Umayyad legacy. Partly on the basis of numismatic evidence, Denise Spellberg and Michael Bates have posited the existence of an Umayyad super-province of the north, whose vice-regents were simultaneously responsible for a section of the Byzantine frontier and the frontier with the Khazars. The absence of simultaneous issues from different cities within the region suggests that the mint followed the super-governor between the different frontiers (see table 2.6).

[147] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, p. 345; Ps.-Sebeos, *History*, i, pp. 134, 169; ii (comm.), pp. 272–3. The testimony of Theophanes may, via Theophilos of Edessa, have its ultimate origin in Arabic accounts, so Ps.-Sebeos may provide a more independent witness: *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, tr. R. G. Hoyland (Liverpool, 2011), pp. 7–10, 140.
[148] Ps.-Sebeos, *History*, i, pp. 148–9; ii (comm.), p. 278; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 77–8, 85–6, 102, 480.

Table 2.6: The dirham Mint of the Umayyad North. Source: Bates 1988, p. 92.

AH	CE	Mint	No.	AH	CE	Mint	No.	AH	CE	Mint	No.
78	697/8	Irmīniyya	1	94	713/14	al-Jazīra	3	114	733/4	al-Bāb	2
79	698/9			95	714/15	al-Jazīra	1	115	734/5	al-Bāb	2
80	699/700	Ḥarrān	1			Irmīniyya	12	116	735/6		
81	700/1	Irmīniyya	2	96	715/16	Irmīniyya	9	117	736/7	al-Bāb	1
82	701/2	Irmīniyya	1	97	716/17	Irmīniyya	5	118	737/8	al-Bāb	4
		Ḥarrān	1	98	717/18	Irmīniyya	9	119	738/9	al-Bāb	6
		al-Mawṣil	1	99	718/19	Irmīniyya	12	120	739/40	al-Bāb	13
83	702/3	al-Mawṣil	1	100	719/20	Irmīniyya	9	121	740/1	al-Bāb	6
84	703/4	Dabīl	1	101	720/1	Irmīniyya	8	122	741/2	al-Bāb	2
85	704/5	Dabīl	4	102	721/2	Irmīniyya	6	123	742/3	al-Bāb	6
		Tiflīs	5	103	722/3	Irmīniyya	7	124	743/4	al-Bāb	2
86	705/6	Dabīl	4	104	723/4	Irmīniyya	7	125	744/5	al-Bāb	6
87	706/7	Ḥarrān	7	105		Irmīniyya	5	126	745/6	al-Bāb	6
88	707/8	Ḥarrān	2			Adharbayjān	14	127	746/7	al-Jazīra	5
89	708/9	Ḥarrān	3	106	725/6	Adharbayjān	3	128	747/8	al-Jazīra	16
		Arrān	2			Irmīniyya	2			al-Bāb	4
90	709/10	Arrān	2	107	726/7	Irmīniyya	3	129	748/9	al-Jazīra	10
91	710/11	Arrān	1	108	727/8	Irmīniyya	4	130	749/50	al-Jazīra	15
92	711/12	Irmīniyya	1	109	728/9	Irmīniyya	3	131	750/1	al-Jazīra	3
		Janza	1	110	729/30	Irmīniyya	1			al-Bāb	1
93	712/13	al-Bāb	1	111	730/1			132	750/1	al-Jazīra	5
94	713/14	Janza	6	112	731/2						
		Irmīniyya	2	113	732/3						

Between the conclusion of the second *fitna* in 73/692–3 and the end of Umayyad period, it is clear that the provinces of al-Jazīra, Armīniya, Arrān and Ādharbayjān were often grouped together under a single super-governor, often from the caliph's family. Although there is no equivalent term, Bates suggested the northern super-province might be seen as analogous to those of the west (al-Maghrib) and the east (al-Mashriq).[149] Al-Balādhurī's narrative makes it clear enough that it was during the later Umayyad period that Muslim control of the South Caucasus was consolidated and that tributary relations began to be established with the highlanders in the

[149] M.L. Bates, 'The Dirham Mint of the Northern Provinces of the Umayyad Caliphate', *Armenian Numismatic Journal*, 15 (1989), pp. 89–111; id. 'History, Geography and Numismatics in the First Century of Islamic Coinage', *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau*, 65 (1986), pp. 231–61; D.A. Spellberg, 'The Umayyad North: Numismatic Evidence for Frontier Administration', *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes*, 33 (1988), pp. 119–27.

North Caucasian hinterland. However, his method of presentation simultaneously manages to make the Umayyad period appear in some respects a deviation from the earlier pattern. He implies that certain members of the Umayyad family and their clients amassed political and economic power at the expense of the Muslim community at large. For instance, al-Balādhurī interpolates a narrative of Ḥabīb's initial conquest of the region around Lake Van with a notice that the lake remained communal property (*mubāḥa*) until Muḥammad b. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (brother of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik, r. 65–86/685–705) became the first governor of the northern super-province (probably in around 72/691–2) and started to sell its fish; later Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik (son of 'Abd al-Malik by a slave woman) took the lake from him as his own property.[150]

Maslama's own appointment as governor in the north followed a very significant Khazar invasion, dated by al-Ṭabarī to 112/730–1, which had passed beyond Arrān and into Ardabīl in Ādharbayjān, and which had led to the death of the previous governor, al-Jarrāḥ.[151] In some of the traditions reported by al-Ṭabarī, the account of al-Jarrāḥ's death is so distorted that it is transposed to Balanjar.[152] Al-Balādhurī's portrayal of al-Jarrāḥ is generally positive: he notes his success in an earlier raid against the Khazars, and his responsible role as a governor in Bardha'a, where he established weights and measures 'according to the standards of justice and honesty'; but he ignores the fanciful tradition about Balanjar.[153] The seriousness of the Khazar invasion through the South Caucasus and into Northern Iran is important to al-Balādhurī's theme. After Maslama's appointment, the commander of the vanguard Sa'īd b. 'Amr al-Jurashī successfully led an initial campaign against the Khazars in the Mughan steppe and began driving them north towards Maymadh, south of the Araxes River. In doing so, Sa'īd was acting on caliphal authority, but Maslama felt his own position threatened, imprisoned Sa'īd and began pursuing the Khazars

[150] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 200; cf. id., p. 205.
[151] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 206; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, ii, p. 1530–2; cf. D. Shapira, 'The Khazar Account on the Ardebil War and the Problem of its Authenticity', in I. Zimonyi and O. Karatay (eds.), *Central Eurasia in the Middle Ages. Studies in Honour of Peter B. Golden* (Wiesbaden, 2016), pp. 313–36.
[152] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, ii, p. 1530–2; cf. id., ii, p. 1453.
[153] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 206.

onto the North Caucasian steppe. According to al-Balādhurī, the caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 105–25/724–43) rebuked his half-brother:

> Do you leave them at Maymadh where you can see them,
> but seek them beyond the limit of the soil?[154]

The message is clear: the responsibility of a governor was to promote the stability and security of his province, and not to engage in extravagant campaigns in order to settle personal scores.

Al-Balādhurī's own limited interest in tales of conquest 'beyond the limit of the soil' extends even to the major campaign by Marwān b. Muḥammad that culminated with the conversion to Islam of an *aẓīm* (chief) of al-Khazar, and his resettlement with a group of al-Khazar in the plain south of Bāb al-abwāb.[155] A version of this narrative, constructed from a composite of al-Balādhurī's account and that of al-Kūfī and Ibn al-Athīr has become the centrepiece of the Arab-Khazar wars in the modern historiography, according to which Marwān b. Muḥammad pursued the Khazar Qaghan far beyond the mountains of the North Caucasus to his capital at Itil and made him convert to Islam in 119/737.[156] This has intrigued historians because of the bearing it has on the vexed question of the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism and because, once again, it appears to confirm the notion of Muslim expansionism.[157] Dunlop believed that Marwān had been planning 'to take the offensive against the Khazars' from the beginning of his governorship in Armīniya, and expressed incredulity at the 'anti-climax' which followed Marwān's campaign.[158] However, the text of al-Balādhurī does not use the term *khāqān* (qaghan), but that of a Khazar

[154] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 206–7.
[155] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 208.
[156] The dating depends partly on Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), who provides a narrative close to that in al-Balādhurī s.a. 114/732–3, elements of which are repeated s.a. 119/737–8, while elements of the story about tribute arrangements with the peoples of the north Caucasus appear s.a. 121/738–9: Ibn al-Athīr, *Tārīkh al-kāmil*, ed. ʿU. Tadmurī, iv, pp. 213–4, 233–8.
[157] Most recently on the conversion: Codoñer, *Theophilos and the East*, pp. 355–62; J. T. Olsson, 'Coup d'état, Coronation and Conversion: Some Reflections on the Adoption of Judaism by the Khazar Khaganate', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 4 (2013), pp. 495–526.
[158] Dunlop, *History of the Jewish Khazars*, pp. 86–7.

aẓīm (chief, notable), for the Khazar leader who converts to Islam.[159] When describing the ruler of the Turks with whom Khosrow I had made the duplicitous marriage alliance, or the ruler of the Khazars whose daughter was married to the governor of Armīniya, Yazīd b. Usayd – both occasions where the high status of the Turkic ruler is crucial to the sense of the story – al-Balādhurī uses the term *malik.*[160] The title *khāqān* was known to al-Balādhurī, as when the title of *khaqān al-jabal* (Qaghan of the Mountain) is used to emphasise the importance of the Sarīr ruler.[161] Al-Balādhurī uses neither term in this context.

In some respects, al-Balādhurī's downplaying of heroic conquest narratives and his implied criticism of some of the Umayyad elite for their personal ambition and greed reflects familiar tropes in 'Abbāsid propaganda. Patricia Crone argued that as the 'Abbāsids began to abandon the idea that, 'salvation lay in going forth for heroic ventures and a new world ahead, not in patiently staying by one's fields or camels', they covered their tracks by framing Umayyad-era concepts (such as the open-ended concept of the *hijra*) as deviations from the norms set by the Prophet.[162] However, al-Balādhurī's purpose in describing the activities of figures such as Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik appears to have extended beyond making normative claims about their venality. By revealing the large and diverse portfolio of private landholding that Maslama managed to amass, from the marshes of Iraq to the very edge of the northern frontier, al-Balādhurī outlines an important feature of the political economy of the Muslim empire that the Umayyads bequeathed to the 'Abbāsids. The pattern of private landholding established by Maslama in Khayzān, where he appropriated estates (*ḍiyā')*, appears to have persisted to the time of writing, when the area was referred to as *ḥawz* (the property or enclosure of) Khayzān.[163]

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[159] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 208; cf. *malik*: Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmīl*, v, pp. 70, 85; *khāqān (malik)*: al-Kūfī, *Kitab al-futūḥ,* viii, pp. 71–4.
[160] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 195–6, 210.
[161] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 196.
[162] P. Crone, 'The First-Century Concept of "Hiğra"', *Arabica* 41:3 (1994), p. 383.
[163] For Maslama's private land-holdings, and his organisation of irrigation and land-reclamation projects: al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 148, 151, 207, 294 and Kennedy, 'Feeding of the Five Thousand', p. 196.

Maslama's acquisition of private estates was connected to his reconquest of al-Bāb, which was apparently then inhabited by a thousand Khazar families at the time, and his policy of establishing relations with the inhabitants of the plains and mountains to the south. Before attempting to take the city itself, he came to terms with the rulers of Sharwān, Līrān, Ṭabarsarān, Fīlān and Jarshān, all given the Persian title of Shāh, as well as the *ṣāḥib* of Masqaṭ.[164] As in Khosrow's time, control of the city of Bāb, and of the highlanders were interdependent. Also crucial was the Sasanian-era infrastructure: Maslama was unable to recapture the city by the use of his military hardware, but by poisoning the cistern, also attributed to Khusro, on which its inhabitants depended for water.[165]

Having taken control of the city, Maslama followed Khosrow's example by paying close attention to its provisions. He settled it with 24,000 Syrians, and assigned them stipends (*'atā'*). He not only reinforced the battlements and built armouries, but built granaries for food for the soldiers and their horses, and filled up the poisoned cistern. Al-Balādhurī's keen sense of the practical significance of these arrangements for his own time, and of the importance of the precedents that groups of settlers could draw upon (and argue over, as we have seen), is made clear by his warning: 'the inhabitants of al-Bāb today do not allow any *'āmil* to enter their city unless he has money to distribute among them.'[166] The work reconstructed from a history by the Ottoman historian Münejjim-bashï (d. 1702) as an eleventh- or twelfth-century *'History of al-Bāb and Shirwān'* by Vladimir Minorsky, emphasises the propensity of the urban population of Bāb to rebel against their Ḥāshimite princes, including for religious reasons, in the tenth and eleventh

[164] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 207.
[165] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 207.
[166] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 207; cf. al-Balādhurī's canonical statement on the *'atā'* at the end of the book: *Futūḥ*, pp. 449–61; Kennedy, *Armies of Caliphs*, pp. 59–95.

centuries; another early hint of this appears in al-Balādhurī's notice about the religious rebel Musāfir al-Qaṣṣāb who had spent time in al-Bāb.[167]

The account of the activities of the governor Marwān b. Muḥammad makes explicit how the relationship between the peoples of the North Caucasian hinterland and the city of Bāb al-Abwāb had a direct bearing on its provisions. After the conversion of the *aẓīm al-Khazar*, Marwān began a series of campaigns in the mountains of the North Caucasus: among the Sarīr, Tūmān[168], Zirīkirān, Ḥamzīn, Sindān[169], Ṭabarsarān, Fīlān, Lakz, the people of Sharwān to the south of Bāb and then against the Dūdāniya in the mountains further to the north-west. The outcome of these activities was a set of agreements according to which almost all of these peoples were required to deliver fixed quantities of grain and young slaves to the city of Bāb each year (table 2.7). The only exceptions were the Fīlānshāh who was exempted on account of his 'distinction in warfare, ability in conflict and the praiseworthiness of his cause', and the Dūdāniya, located at a further remove from Bāb, whose people Marwān slaughtered. The granaries of Bāb were to be filled with grain extracted from the peoples of the North Caucasus.[170]

[167] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 209; *History of Sharvān*, ed. Minorsky, pp. 19–20 (religious revolt), 21 (people depose their *amīr*).
[168] Possibly to be identified with the Ghumīq (Qumukh), on the Qumukh tributary of the Qoy Su; cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 206 (campaigns of al-Jarrāh); Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, pp. 96–7.
[169] al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* ed. de Goeje, p. 208, and MS BL Add. 23264 f.47 obv. lack diacriticals for S.*ndān; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* ed. Munajjid, p. 245 gives Sindān; Minorsky reads this as Shandān and tentatively locates this in the Aqusha valley, a tributary of the Qumukh, although he describes the problem of location as a 'major headache'. The *History of Sharvān* describes a joint campaign by the Muslim Yazīdids of Shirwān and the Hāshimids of Bāb against the pagan Shandān in the later ninth century: *History of Sharvān*, (text) p. 4; comm., pp. 101–4; Laurent, *L'Arménie*, rev. Canard, p. 577.
[170] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 208–9.

Table 2.7: Grain and slave requisitions from the peoples of the North Caucasus

People	Quantity of Grain (*mudd*) p.a.	Number of Slaves p.a.
Sarīr	100,000	500 girls, 500 boys
Tūmān	20,000	50 girls, 50 boys
Zirīkirān	10,000	50 youths
Ḥumrīn	30,000	500 youths (once only)
Sindān	5,000	100 youths (once only)
Ṭabarsarān	10,000	
Lakz	20,000	
Sharwān	10,000	
Total	*205,000*	*1,750 (year 1) and 1,150 p.a. henceforth*

It is difficult to make use of these numbers. If al-Balādhurī is relying upon an orally transmitted tradition, possibly from one of his sources in Bardha'a, then we could expect the numbers, if they had any basis in reality, to have changed in the process of transmission. If they have a documentary basis, then what period do those documents themselves originate from? Has al-Balādhurī or one of his sources extrapolated from arrangements made at a different time? Moreover, the value of a single *mudd* varied greatly within the early Islamic world. Walther Hinz gives equivalences for Medina of 1 *mudd* = ca. 1.053 litres, for Egypt and Iraq of 2.5 litres, of 3.673 litres for Syria, 4.32 litres for the Maghreb of 4.32 litres, and Jerusalem of 100 litres. So, depending on the weights and measures used (and al-Balādhurī gives us no numerical values for the al-Jarrāḥī measure that he says was introduced in Bardha'a, let alone values for local Bāb measures), the 205,000 *mudd* of grain flowing into the granaries of Bāb could be the equivalent of anything between 215,000 litres p.a. and 885,600 l p.a. (or 20,500,000 litres p.a if we include the Jerusalem *mudd*).[171]

[171] W. Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte* (Leiden, 1955), pp. 45–7.

We also do not know the types or weights of the grains in question. For instance, if we assumed the tribute all came in the form of wheat, and took an approximate ancient wheat grain weight as 0.63 kg per litre[172], we would have a minimum value of:

215,000 l x 0.63 kg = 135,450 kg p.a. wheat

and a maximum value of:

885,600 l x 0.63 kg = 557,928 kg p.a. wheat.

However, if we assumed the tribute all came in the form of barley, and took an approximate ancient barley grain weight as 0.52 kg per litre[173], we would have a minimum value of:

215,000 l x 0.52 kg = 111,800 kg p.a. barley

and a maximum value of :

885,600 l x 0.52 kg = 177,120 kg p.a. barley.

Who would that feed? If we were to assume that people of Bāb al-Abwāb consumed 237 kg wheat per year, then this volume would feed between around 570 and 2350 people for a year.[174]

[172] Measurements were made in capacity, not weight. Using weights of ancient wheat grains at equivalences 52.512 litres = 32.96 kg: A. Moreno, *Feeding the Democracy. The Athenian Grain Supply in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC* (Oxford, 2007), p. 325.

[173] Using weights of ancient barley grains at equivalences 52.512 litres = 27.47 kg: Moreno *Feeding the Democracy,* p. 325.

[174] Moreno, *Feeding the Democracy,* tab. 1, p. 10. However, the 237 kg assumes a very high percentage of the diet depended on grains (75%). For reasons we will discuss, it is probably useful to assume a much higher percentage protein in the diet of the inhabitants of Bāb al-Abwāb: L. Foxhall and H. Forbes, 'Sitometreia: The Role of Grain as a Staple Food in Classical Antiquity', *Chiron* 12 (1982), pp. 49, 70–2; Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, pp. 201–9; P. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World. Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 89–106; C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages. Social Change in England, c. 1200-1520* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.151–60: Dyer finds a median grain allowance in maintenance agreements amounting to 432 litres of grains p.a., which he reckons would amount to about 0.79kg of bread a day, or 287 kg p.a. John Haldon produces figures for Byzantine field armies on campaign, according to which men were given a ration of 1.3 kg p.d. and horses 2.2 kg p.d. So, for instance, if all the 24,000 Syrians settled by Maslama were fighting-age men, and if they were all to go on campaign, and consume grain on this basis, then the men alone would consume 31,200 kg of wheat p.d.

Given the relatively small quantities of grain supplied (from the perspective of the demands of the city of Bāb, with its garrison of 24,000 Syrians, if not from the perspective of the people handing over the grain), it is intriguing that al-Balādhurī goes to the trouble of carefully differentiating between the levels of the impositions. Traditions of intensive terraced agriculture in the mountains of Dagestan have their roots in deep antiquity, and may well have been practiced in the eighth and ninth centuries.[175] There was a limit to how much Marwān, still less al-Balādhurī, collecting his materials over a century later, can have known about the detailed ecological, economic and political constraints that determined the different impositions. The ability of the leaders of the peoples of the Sarīr, Tūmān, Zirīkirān, Ḥamzīn, Sindān, Ṭabarsarān, Fīlān, Lakz, and Sharwān to produce the grain required of them depended on the carrying capacity of the land, the variation in the harvest yield, the size of the populations they had control or influence over, the levels of resistance, active or passive, to these extractions from within their societies, and on the strategies of cooperation or defiance towards the *ʿāmils* of Bāb taken by their leaders. The details of how these relationships worked on the ground we do not see. Equally, the social effects on the highlander societies entailed by the different deliveries of slaves find no reflection in the calibrated numbers and the sexualised descriptions of the boys and girls with their 'black hair' and 'long eye-lashes'.[176] For the compiler of the list, what mattered was the

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So they would consume all of the wheat brought as tribute within between 4 and 17 days: J. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204* (London, 1999), pp. 287–92.

[175] M. A. Aglarov, 'Terrasnoe zemledelie Dagestana (Voprosy genezisa, kul'turnoi tipologii i sotsial'noi roli sistemy', *Studia Praehistorica,* 8 (1986), pp. 50–62; K. Aliev, 'K voprosu o zemledelii i skotovodstve v drevnei Kavkazskoi Albanii', *UZIIIaL*, (1969), pp. 29–40; V. G. Kotovich, 'O khoziastve naseleniia gornogo Dagestana v drevnosti', *SA*, (1965) 3, pp. 5 – 13; on the extensive agricultural context of the fortress of Targu, possibly the central place of the Ḥumrīn: V. G. Kotovich, V. M. Kotovich and V. M. Salikhov, 'Gorodishche Tarku', *Drevnie i srednevekovye poseleniia Dagestana. Sbornik statei* (Makhachkala, 1983), pp. 57–82; M. S. Gadzhiev, *Drevnii gorod Dagestana: opyt istoriki-topograficheskogo i sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo analiza* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 48–56; on the terraces at a 10th-12th century settlement on the Avar Qoy Su River: Z. Kh. Albegova, R. G. Magomedov and A. I. Taimazov, 'Stely Gotsatlinskogo (Ortokolinskogo) 1-go poseleniia x-xii vekov', in D.S. Korobob (ed.), *E.I. Krupnov i razvitie arkheologii Severnogo Kavkaza* (Moscow, 2014) pp. 309–11; A. V. Borisov, D. S. Korobov, R. G. Magomedov, 'Pochvenno-arkheologicheskie issledovaniia terrasynkh polei v raione stroitel'stva Gotsatlinskoi (Ortokolinskoi) GES v Dagestane', id., pp. 323–5.

[176] Compare Ibn Buṭlān's (d. ca. 1068) characterisation of the physical attributes of slaves from different regions, including Alan women (who 'have red and white complexions and are very fleshy'): Ibn Buṭlān, *Risāla fī shirāʾ al-raqīq wa-taqlīb al-ʿabīd*, ed. 'A. Hārūn, *Nawādir al-makhṭūtāt* (2 vols., Beirut, 1991), i, p. 408; German tr. H. Müller, *Die Kunst des Sklavenkaufs, nach arabischen, persischen und türkischen*

ranked diversity of resources brought into the city of Bāb al-Abwāb. Table 2.6 above showed that the dirham issues were issued from al-Bāb for several years in the 730s and 740s. The extended presence of the governor of the Umayyad North with his mint in the region makes the notion of calibrated deliveries of tribute from the highlanders during those years seem quite plausible. However, just as the quantities of grain recorded cannot tell us the whole story about the city's grain supply (other sources may have included surpluses marketed from the estates in Khayzān), the record of formalised deliveries of slaves from a range of peoples deep into the highlands may be simply the surface of a wider acquisition of slaves from the hinterland for which a demand persisted even once the commander of the Umayyad armies in the north had left the region.

2.6 'Unprecedented peace': the 'Abbāsid North

Following the narrative presented by Dunlop, according to which Islamic expansion in the north reached its climax with Marwān's campaign of 737, an influential article by Thomas Noonan argued for a clear break between Umayyad and 'Abbāsid policies towards the north. According to Noonan, the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr recognised the need to stabilise the frontier.[177] This prompted his decision to order his governor of Armīniya, Yazīd b. Usayd al-Sulamī to marry the daughter of the *malik al-Khazar*, as reported in al-Balādhurī. Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī reports that she was called Khātūn (apparently misinterpreting this Turkic title *Qatun* as a name), and that her subsequent death near Bardha'a prompted suspicions of foul play, and a major Khazar invasion.[178] The invasion and the title (*Khat'un)* is also recorded in the Armenian *History of*

Ratgebern vom 10. biz zum 18. Jahrhundert (Freibrug, 1980), pp. 70–1. My thanks to Marek Jankowiak for this reference. On power, sex and empire, cf.: Mattingly, *Imperialism*, pp. 94–121.

[177] T. S. Noonan, 'Why Dirhams First Reached Russia: the Role of Arab-Khazar Relations in the Development of the Earliest Islamic Trades with Eastern Europe', *AEMA*, 4 (1984), pp. 151–282.

[178] Al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, viii, pp. 229–35; it is not entirely clear whether al-Kūfī was writing in the early ninth or the late ninth/early tenth century: Robinson argues the former: Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p.34 n. 21, *contra* A. N. Kurat, 'Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. A'tham al-Kūfī's Kitāb al-Futūḥ and its Importance Concerning the Arab Conquest in Central Asia and the Khazars', *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi,* 7:2 (1949), pp. 274–82; cf. C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: a Bio-bibliographical*

Łewond, but neither the invasion nor her title are mentioned at all in al-Balādhurī.[179] In Noonan's account, while this hindered the process of normalising relations, the direction of 'Abbāsid policy remained the same, enabling by the end of the eighth century an enormous boom in the commerce flowing through the Caucasus between the Islamic world and the Khazars.

Noonan's picture of the transition from the Umayyad to the 'Abbāsid period may have been shaped, via Dunlop, by 'Abbāsid propaganda that presented the issue of the northern frontier as essentially 'solved' after the advent of the 'blessed dynasty'. However, it was primarily a response to the numismatic evidence which shows the flow of silver to northern Russia beginning in large quantities in the early ninth century, but also suprisingly small quantities of Islamic silver found in the North Caucasus after the mid eighth century. Noonan's argument rests on the idea that the Arab-Khazar wars of the eighth century had been a major impediment to trade which could then flow freely once peace had been established and the Khazars and the 'Abbāsid caliphate could act as trading partners in the exploitation of the forest zone. In this scheme, the North Caucasus falls from sight once peace is established. However, al-Balādhurī's account of the political economy of the frontier suggests that the relationship between war and commerce was more complex, and that the North Caucasus continued to develop as both a Muslim and a Khazar hinterland even as a much larger hinterland began to open up in the forest zone.

Tenth-century geographers talk about Bāb al-Abwāb as a major commercial centre. We read the following in al-Iṣṭakhrī:

> And as for Bāb al-Abwāb it is a city on the sea and in the middle of it is a port for ships and between this port and the sea is a meandering entrance and at this mouth is an elongated chain which the ships cannot leave or enter unless by permission and these barrages are made from rocks and lead. Bāb al-Abwāb is on the sea of Ṭabaristān and this city was larger than Ardabīl and it has plenty of agriculture but little horticulture except for what was brought to it from its hinterland. This city was on the Iron Wall, and it was

Survey (London, 1927–) 1:1, p. 207; 1:2, p. 1260; Schreiner, 'History of the *Futūḥ*', pp. 151–73. Al-Balādhurī's respect for al-Kūfī as a source: Conrad, Review of *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, p. 181. On the title *Qatun:* Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 196–7.

[179]Łewond, *History*, tr. Z. Arzoumanion (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 125–6. On this source see: T. Greenwood, 'A Reassessment of the *History of Łewond*', *Le Muséon* 125:1-2 (2014), pp. 99–167.

> built from baked bricks and adobe bricks. It was the port to the Khazar Sea for the Sarīr and other heathen and it was also the port for Jurjān and Ṭabaristān and Daylam. From there is exported cotton garments, and there are no cotton garments in Arrān or Armīnīya or Adharbayjān except these. And they have saffron, and slaves (*raqīq*) are brought there from the other lands of the infidels.[180]

The pre-eminence of the Sarīr among the heathen who paid tribute to Marwān is reflected here, as is the dependence of the city on the produce of its hinterlands. However, the description of the city as the 'port to the Khazar Sea for the Sarīr and other heathen' casts a different light upon the relationship between the latter and the Muslim authorities. The relatively localised slave raiding and tribute raising that supplied the city of Bāb al-Abwāb appears in a wider context of Caspian exchange, when we see the city being supplied with cotton from northern Iran, and of other slaves from farther afield. The significance of the reference to the Ṣaqāliba captured from al-Khazar by Marwān b. Muḥammad becomes clearer.[181] The Sarīr who come to pay tribute in al-Balādhurī come to market in al-Iṣṭakhrī.

This perhaps should not be seen simply as a chronological development from the time of al-Balādhurī and al-Iṣṭakhrī. The height of cotton production in northern Iran was the second half of the ninth-century: precisely the time when al-Balādhurī was writing.[182] This was also the height of the flow of silver from 'Abbāsid lands through the Caucasus to the lands of the north, and, as recent research is indicating, of Slavic slaves in the opposite direction.[183] There is no reason to think that the picture al-Iṣṭakhrī paints of the relationship between the western and eastern shores of the Caspian could not have applied in some respects half a century earlier. Moreover, recent research has questioned the sharp distinction Noonan drew between the ninth century

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[180] Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb Masālik wa mamālik*, ed. M. de Goeje (Leiden, 1870), p. 184; Ibn Ḥawqal also names Bāb al-Abwāb as a port of the Alans: Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. M. de Goeje (Leiden, 1873), p. 242. *Raqīq* was a generic term for slaves in Classical Arabic, although not found in the Qu'rān: ''Abd', *EI*^{2}, i, p. 24.
[181] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 207–8.
[182] R. Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate and Camels in Early Islamic Iran. A Moment in World History* (New York, 2009).
[183] T. Noonan, 'Why dirhams first came to Russia'; id., 'What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century?', *AEMA*, 3 (1983), pp. 265–81; id., 'Khazaria as an Intermediary between Islam and Eastern Europe in the second half of the Ninth Century: The Numismatic Perspective', *AEMA*, 5 (1985), pp. 175–204. See in particular the work by the Dirhams for Slaves project: http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/dirhamsforslaves/index.php/en/ (Accessed 31/01/15).

and the tenth century, where silver flowed north from 'Abbāsid heartlands through the Caucasus and Khazar lands in the ninth century, and north from the Samānids to Volga Bulgaria in the tenth century.[184] The reminder from al-Iṣṭakhrī that products could flow across the Caspian from east to west, as well as from north to south, indicates that we should see the longer distance trade networks reflected in the numismatic evidence in the context of a whole series of complex, overlapping relationships of trade, raiding, taxation and tributary arrangements. As we shall see in chapter four, the existence of a 'trade route' across the North Caucasus from the Caspian, through the Alan lands of the central North Caucasus, to the Black Sea has been proposed on the basis of archaeological sources: al-Balādhurī, al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal give us an insight into the relationship between trade and tribute that underpinned its operation in the ninth and tenth centuries.[185]

For the eighth century, al-Balādhurī reports Yazīd b. Usayd's activities on other parts of the North Caucasian frontier. Numerous Arab and Khazar armies are described passing through the Bāb al-Lān in al-Balādhurī and other sources: in the campaign that led to the conversion of the Khazar *aẓīm*, Marwān b. Muḥammad passed through Bāb al-Lān, while his subordinates took the Caspian route.[186] Having reconquered Bāb al-Lān we are told that Yazīd b. Usayd stationed in it a salaried

[184] R. Kovalev, 'The Production of Dirhams in the Coastal Caspian Sea Provinces of Northern Iran in the 10th – Early 11th Centuries and their Circulation in Northern Lands', *AEMA*, 19 (2012), pp. 133–83.
[185] Traceable, for instance, through the distribution of glass beads: V. B. Kovalevskaia, 'Proizvodstvo i import stekliannykh bus Dagestana', *Materialy po arkheologii Dagestan,* 3 (Makhachkala, 1973), pp.62–79.
[186] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 207. The interpretation of the archaeological evidence for the presence of Sasanian fortifications in the central and western North Caucasus is controversial. For example, sites as far to the north-west as Khumara in the Teberda valley have been claimed for the Sasanians: M. S. Gadzhiev, 'Khumara: nekotorye stroitel'nye paralleli i problema datirovki ukreplenii', in V.I. Kozenkova (ed.), *Ocherki srednevekovoi arkheologii Kavkaza: k 85-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia V. A. Kuznetsova: sb. statei* (Moscow, 2013), pp. 51–65. Vladimir Malashev suggests a possible Sasanian attribution for Shelkozavodskoe in Chechnya (personal communication): V.V. Zotov, 'Shelkozavodskoe gorodishche: k voprosu o kul'turnoi prinadelezhnosti', *KSIA*, 218 (2005), pp. 129–38. The rich anthropological and cultural material recently excavated at the Mamisondon burial site (ca. seventh to ninth centuries CE) in one of the passes to the west of the Darial Gorge, has led archaeologists to hypothesise the intermarriage of local women and Arab soldiers. There are dangers of circular reasoning. The archaeological publication makes use of a historical narrative derived from the Islamic sources that is here being critiqued. However the dating of the site to around eighth century is arrived at independently: Z.Kh. Albegova and L. I. Vereshchinskii-Babailov, *Rannesrednevekovyi mogil'nik Mamisondon* (Moscow, 2010).

cavalry guard (*rābiṭa min ahl al-diwān).* Significantly, we are told that at the same time he conquered the neighbouring Ṣanāriya (Canark'/Ts'anar), whom he made to pay *kharāj*.[187] The control of the fortification, its provisioning, and its relationship to the neighbouring peoples are shown to be interdependent.

Following Yazīd b. Usayd's ill-fated marriage alliance, Yazīd sent an official to the oil wells (*naffāṭa*) and the salt pans (*mallāhāt*) of the land of Shirwān, and levied a tax on them.[188] The oil resources of Baku continue to provoke considerable excitement for imperial administrators to this day.[189] What is perhaps more surprising is the recognition of their exceptional value in the early Islamic period. The tenth-century traveller Abū Dūlaf reports:

> From Muqān I travelled 80 parasangs under trees along the coast of the great Tabaristan sea until I reached a place called Bakuia, belonging to the provinces of Shirwān. There I found a source of oil, which receives thousands of dirhams of rent per day, and near it another one, pouring out without cease, day and night, white, like jasmine, liquid oil: the value of the latter is the same as the first.[190]

Al-Balādhurī's concern to make a claim on these for the central administration is thrown into sharper relief by reports in the early eleventh-century *History of Bāb al-Abwāb and Shirwān* of the claims made upon the revenues from the oil wells of Shirwān by the population of Bāb al-Abwāb (*ahl al-Bāb*).[191]

The oil resources of this region were known long before the time of Yazīd b. Usayd or al-Balādhurī. The traditions of Zoroastrian fire-temples in the Iranian world, perhaps most famously

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[187] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* pp. 209–10. The *arkhōn* of *Tzanaria* appears adjacent to the Alans in the list of Caucasian leaders in Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De ceremoniis* ii, ch. 48 (ed. Reiske, p. 688); B. Martin-Hisard, 'Constantinople et les archontes du monde caucasien dans le Livre des Cérémonies, II.48', in *TM,* 13 (2000), pp. 487–95; C. Zuckerman, 'À propos du livre des Cérémonies II, 48', *i*d, pp. 532-3 ; Ananias of Širak, *Geography*, tr. Hewsen, pp. 55, 116.
[188] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ,* p. 210.
[189] J. Marriott and M. Minio-Paluello, *The Oil Road. Journeys from the Caspian Sea to the City of London* (London, 2012).
[190] Abū Dulāf, *Abu-Dulaf Mis'ar ibn Muhalhil's Travels in Iran (circa A.D. 950)*, ed. and tr. V. Minorsky (Cairo, 1955), p. 36.
[191] *History of Sharvān*, ed. Minorsky, p. 5 (text).

Ādur Gušnasp/Takht-i Suleiman in Iranian Azerbaijan, are well attested.[192] Al-Ṭabarī mentions its use in votive offerings in Islamic rituals and in the rituals of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia.[193] However, in the spring of 861, al-Mutawakkil ordered for wax to be used instead of olive oil and naphtha at pilgrimage sites near Mecca.[194] This indicates a concern on the part of the central 'Abbāsid administration to husband this resource for other uses. There are numerous accounts of its use by 'Umayyad and 'Abbāsid armies in military contexts.[195] The references to different forms of military technology that used naphtha – to 'naphtha throwers' (*al-naffāṭin*) and 'naphtha-hurling weapons' (*al-naffāṭāt*) – in al-Ṭabarī suggest analogies with the famous Byzantine military technology of 'Greek fire', even if the exact details were successfully kept as a state secret within the Byzantine court.[196]

Paul Magdalino has argued that the references to naphtha in *De Administrando Imperio* indicate a central concern of its compiler, but also reveal the 'coded and deliberate' process of selection: mapping out sites around the Black Sea where naphtha could be extracted for the purposes of producing Greek fire, and establishing the sets of logistical and diplomatic relations that would be required to secure access to those sources.[197] Discoveries of Byzantine-style pottery with traces of naphtha from around the Bosporus region provide archaeological evidence for the active exploitation and transportation of these resources during the period in question.[198] Both *De*

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[192] M. Boyce, 'Adur Gusnasp', *EIr*, 1.5, pp. 475–6.
[193] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* i, p. 1691.
[194] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* ii, p. 1471.
[195] Constantinople in 716-17: (in the *Kitāb al-'uyūn*) E. W. Brooks, 'The Campaign of 716-18, from Arabic Sources', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 19 (1899), p. 21. Sieges of Baghdad: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* ii, pp. 869–70, 1748. Al-Afshīn's campaign against the Khurramiyya of Bukhara *op. cit.,* ii, p. 1215. Repression of the Zanj revolt *op. cit.*, ii, pp. 2060–1.
[196] *DAI*, ch. 13, lines 73–103; J.H. Pryor and E.M. Jeffreys, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ. The Byzantine Navy ca 500-1204* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 609–12.
[197] Magdalino, 'Historical Geography', p. 35.
[198] J. Shepard, '"Mists and portals": the Black Sea's north coast', in M. Mango (ed.), *Byzantine Trade, 4th – 12th centuries. The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 427–8; K.V. Kostrin, 'Issledovanie nefti iz srednevekovykh amfor, naidennykh bliz stanitsy Proletarskoi', *SA* (1965), 1, pp. 291–3; id., 'Issledovanie smolistogo veschestva iz "chernosmolenykh" kuvshinov srednevekovi Tmutarakani', *SA* (1967), 1, pp. 285–98; id., 'Issledovanie smolistogo osadka iz drevnikh amfor, naidennykh pri raskopkakh Tanaisa' *SA* (1971), 3, pp. 264–5; id., 'Nakhodki ostatkov nefti v arkheologicheskikh pamiatnikakh Severnogo Prichernomor'ia', *SA* (1975), 3, pp. 206–10; S.A. Pletneva, 'Tamatarkha-

Administrando Imperio and *Futūḥ al-Buldān* reflect imperial interests in strategic resources, and an awareness of the way local conditions shaped access to these resources.

This may also help us to rethink the relationship between the ʻAbbāsids and the Khazars in the Caucasus. A revealing interpolation in al-Balādurī's narrative of the early campaigns of Salmān b. Rabīʻa in Albania concerns the settlement of the Kur valley upstream from Bardhaʻa. Al-Balādhurī's sources in Bardhaʻa (*ḥadīthanī jamāʻa min ahl al-Bardhaʻa)* informed him that the ancient city of Shamkūr was conquered by troops sent by Salmān, after which it flourished until the 760s, when it was destroyed by the Sevordikʻ (al-Sāwardiyya) following the departure of the governor Yazīd b. Usayd:

> Then Bughā the *mawlā* of al-Muʻtaṣim billāh (praise be upon his name) rebuilt it in the year 240/854-5, when he was governor of Armīniya and Adharbayjān and Shimshāṭ, and he settled in it people who came to him from al-Khazar, seeking peace because of their interest in Islam. He transferred merchants there from Bardhaʻa and called it al-Mutawakiliyya.[199]

The merchants transferred from Bardhaʻa provide us with a clue as to where the *ahl al-Bardhaʻa* gathered their information about affairs further up the Kur valley. However, they also reveal a context for the settlement of the Khazars. Al-Balādhurī does not mention explicitly the reason why the merchants were transferred to Shamkūr following a grant to the Khazars of the right to settle in this city surrounded by the valuable grazing land of the upper Kur valley: but trade in livestock would be an obvious solution. The idea that ʻAbbāsid administrators were actively promoting the migration of nomadic tribes from the north Caucasian steppe into the Kur valley in order to gain access to their livestock makes sense of al-Balādhurī's discussion of earlier Khazar resettlements into these areas, and perhaps even the continuing identification of Qabala with the

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Tmutarakan'', in T.M. Makarova, and S.A. Pletneva (eds.), *Krym, Severo-Vostochnoe Prichernomor'e i Zakavakaz'e v epokhu srednevekov'ia* (Moscow, 2003), p.175; V.E. Naumenko, 'O bosporskoi nefti Konstantina VII Bagrianorodnogo kak voenno-ekonomicheskom faktore politiki vizantiiskoi imperii v Severnom Prichernomor'e v X – XI vv.', in E.A. Mel'nikova (ed.), *Vostochnaia Evropa v drevnosti i srednevekov'e. Ekonomicheskie osnovy formirovaniia gosudarstva v drevnosti i srednevekov'e* (Moscow, 2013), pp. 205–10.

[199] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 203.

Khazars. The outcome of Marwān b. Muḥammad's campaign, following the conversion of the Khazar *aẓīm*, almost exactly parallels the actions of Bughā in AH 240: having accepted Islam, a group of Khazars were given access to grazing lands under Muslim control. Al-Balādhurī showed how Marwān supplied Bāb al-Abwāb with its grain and slaves through tributary arrangements with the Sarīr and other peoples of the mountains: here he was showing how Marwān ensured Bāb al-Abwāb had access to supplies of livestock.

Evidence of the value of the Khazars as a source of livestock comes from Ibn 'Atham al-Kūfī. His account of the dowry brought by Khatūn, the daughter of the Khazar ruler, on her marriage to Yazīd b. Usayd, is exceptionally interesting given the picture that has emerged from al-Balādhurī. Al-Kūfī tells us that once Yazīd had paid 100,000 dirhams, Khatūn arrived with 10,000 Khazars from her tribe (*min ahl bayt min al-khazar*), 4,000 exceptional mares (*ramaka)*, 1,000 mules *(baghl wa baghla)*, 1,000 slaves (*insān*), 10,000 small Khazar camels (*jamal khazarī min al-jamāl al-ṣughār*), 1,000 Turkish camels, all of them with two humps (*jamal turkī kull jamal minhā bi-sanāmīn*), 20,000 sheep, 10,000 wagons with doors and coverings in gold and silver, with fur and silk hangings, 20 bags heaped with gold, silver goods, eating vessels, and more. Khatūn and her entourage were then encamped outside the walls of Bardha'a.[200]

The list of resources that this ninth-century historian tells us was controlled by the Khazars, and brought south into the Kur valley is exceptionally valuable. The references to silk, fur and slaves alongside large quantities of livestock, are exactly what we would expect. But what can be made of the distinction made between 'Khazar' and 'Turkic' camels, and the specification that the latter were two-humped? Richard Bulliet has recently written that, 'the history of the geographical dividing line between one-humped camels and two-humped camels has never been thoroughly explored'.[201] While earlier, two-humped camels had been characteristic of northern Iran and

[200] Al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, viii, p. 230.
[201] Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate and Camels*, p. 106.

Central Asia, Bulliet argues that by the early eleventh century Oghuz Turcomans were interbreeding one-humped female camels and selected two-humped males, to create superior breeds that could be sold to supply the caravan trade and the military. The Oghuz migrated to the south of the Karakum desert in order to take advantage of an ecological niche in the hills and alluvial plain of the northern piedmont of the Kopet Dagh, where they were able to breed their hybrid camels.[202] The combined evidence of al-Kūfī and al-Balādhurī make it tempting to suggest similar migrations, actively supported by 'Abbāsid administrators, into the foothills of the Great Caucasus in southern Dagestan or the Lesser Caucasus in the Kur valley. Al-Kūfī indicates a distinction between 'Khazar' camels and the two-humped camels associated with the northern Turkic world. The identification of this breed with the Khazars, may reflect the self-identification of some of the pastoralists who bred them and were known to make use, invited or otherwise, of the grazing lands of the plains to the south of Bāb al-Abwāb, and the valley of the Kur.

2.7 Conclusions

Al-Balādhurī's chapter on the *futūḥ Armīniya* concludes with Bughā al-Kabīr's suppression of a major revolt and the removal of the *amīr* Isḥāq b. Ismā'īl from Tiflīs, telling us that in 241/855 the *thughur* saw a peace the like of which it had not known. Symbolically, Bughā is then described returning to Sāmarrā.[203] His absence from Sāmarrā in 861 would be a factor in the murder of al-Mutawakkil and the political turmoil that followed, for the 'Abbāsid state, for the province of Armīniya, and for al-Balādhurī personally. The *History of Bāb and Shirwān* tells us that it was precisely at this time that the governors of Bāb al-Abwāb, Hāshim b. Surāqa of the Banū Sulaym, and Shirwān, the Yazīdid Haytham b. Khālid began administering their provinces independently

[202] Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate and Camels*, pp. 96–123.
[203] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 212.

(*istabadda*).[204] The grand narrative of conquest and imperial succession, of closing off the threat from the north, of dealing with the rebellious *mulūk al-ṭawā'if*, Armenian princes, tribal chiefs and slave revolts, ends on an ambiguous note.

However, the ambiguity should not surprise. The *Futūḥ al-buldān*, was a text produced by a powerful and sophisticated courtier, administrator and *adīb* in a complicated political context. It translates between different administrative languages, registers, genres, in order to stake claims and to provide lessons in negotiation, both at the imperial centre and on the periphery. Its approach to the historical geography of the North Caucasus should be viewed accordingly. This chapter has suggested that the narrative of the 'Arab-Khazar' wars that it provides needs to be viewed with extreme caution. However, a revealing set of concerns do emerge, regarding the creation and reproduction of client rulers in the mountains of the North Caucasus, the reinforcement of hierarchical relations between them, the appraisal of the different resources of the region that could be used to generate revenues, from the terraced agriculture of Dagestan, from slave-raiding, from the oil-wells and salt-pans of Shirwān. There is no place in this text for neat distinctions between frontier management, fiscal extraction and the management of commerce.

In a passage on pre-Islamic history, al-Balādhurī presents the different titles that can be used to cultivate relations with the Sarīr, he reveals their pre-eminence among the other peoples of the north-east Caucasian mountains, and makes a claim to tribute payments from them; later all of these elements are re-combined in a passage that describes preparation for war with the Khazars and the provisioning of Bāb al-Abwāb with grain and slaves. The story of Salmān b. Rabī'a's heroic campaigns in the 'First Arab-Khazar War' is interrupted with a notice about the movement of merchants up the Kur to trade with the Khazars at Shamkūr in the ninth century, and the culmination of the story often misread as referring to the conversion of the Khazar Qaghan is in

[204] *History of Sharvān*, pp. 4, 17.

fact the movement of a group of Khazars into grazing territory that could be easily controlled just to the south of Bāb al-Abwāb. Like the texts of Constantine VII, the *Futūḥ al-buldān* is a boastful text that draws on ancient imperial traditions and narratives of salvation; but like those texts, it has practical points to make about the administration of empire as well.

CHAPTER 3.

THE KISLOVODSK BASIN IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

3.1. Grushnitskii's fall

At the climax of Lermontov's novel *Hero of Our Time*, the eponymous anti-hero Pechorin scrambles up a rock-face, following the young Grushnitskii to a triangular natural promontory overhanging the gorge below.[205] The description is usually identified with a rock promontory above the river Ol'khovka, around 3 km from the town of Kislovodsk in the north-west Caucasus and the site is now known as 'Lermontov's cliff' (Lermontovskaia skala).[206] The duel that follows in the novel was lent added pathos by the author's own death in a duel a mere 40 km away on the side of Mount Mashuk in Piatigorsk, in July 1841, a few years after writing the novel.

Much of the novel occurs in the two spa towns of Kislovodsk and Piatigorsk, where soldiers such as Lermontov took the waters while resting from the wars to crush local resistance to Russian imperial rule in the mountains of the North Caucasus. In doing so, they also displaced the Kabardins from their control of the mineral water resources of its springs, which were crucial for livestock rearing in an area whose mountain streams were unable to provide sufficient levels of salt.[207] Lermontov, like Pechorin and Grushnitskii, was stationed in Piatigorsk, a town spread

[205] M.Iu. Lermontov, *Poemy. Geroi nashego vremeni* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 420–8.
[206] This is the site of a number of rich furnished burial sites: see §3.4 below; A.P. Runich 'Dva bogatykh rannesrednevekovykh pogrebeniia iz Kislovodskoi kotloviny', *SA* (1977), 1, pp. 248–77.
[207] Kislovodsk derives its name ('Acidic Water') from the high carbonic acid content of its mineral waters. The importance of the mineral water springs for livestock rearing, and the political significance of its control for Kabardin hegemony over the other peoples of the region, had been recognised since the beginning of Russian colonisation. The Russians justified control of this resource on grounds that the Kabardins did the same to their neighbours: 'Die Kabardiner wissen durchen diese unentberliche Waare nicht allein vielen Gewinst von ihren Nachbaren zu ziehen, sondern sie brauchen sie auch als ein Mittel, diese Völker im Zaum und Gehorsam zu erhalten': J.A. Güldenstädt, *Geograficheskie i istoricheskie izvestiia o novoi pogranichnoi linii Rossiiskoi imperii, provedenooi mezhdu Terekom i Azovskim morem* [Originally published in *Mesiatseslov istoricheskii i geograficheskii na 1779 god*] (Nal'chik, 2010), p. 26; id., *Reisen durch Rußland und im Caucasischen Gebürge* (St. Petersburg, 1787, 1791), i, pp. 456–8; ii, p. 21.

between the volcanic outcrops of Mashuk and Beshtau. From the summit of Mashuk the view to the north is broken only by a single volcanic outcrop near the settlement now called Mineral'nye Vody (Mineral Waters), but is otherwise almost entirely flat, opening out towards the steppes further north (cf. Fig. 3.1). To the south, by contrast, the landscape slopes up towards the Great Caucasus Mountain range, towered over by Mt. Elbrus, Europe's highest mountain (cf. Fig.3.2). Still looking out from the summit of Mashuk, and following the line of the river Podkumok upstream, to the south-west, one can see the settlement of Essentuki, which has the largest Pontic Greek population of any town in Russia. Beyond that, the hills part between the Borgustan ridge, the edge of the Stavropol' plateau to the north, and the Dzhinal ridge, which obscures the view further to the south-west and towards the Black Sea (cf. Map IV).

In Lermontov's time, the area securely controlled by Russian troops ended with the Kislovodsk fortress just beyond the opening between the Borgustan and Dzhinal ridges just described. When Pechorin ventured out on horseback beyond the fortress, to the ring-shaped rock formation ('Kol'tso-gora') above the left-bank of the Podkumok where the Russians would go to watch the sunset, or to the cliff where Grushnitskii met his end, it was still never more than a few kilometres further into the Kislovodsk drainage basin formed by the Podkumok and its tributaries. Today, the railway line from Moscow ends in Kislovodsk, and the border between the province of Stavropol' krai and the republic of Karachaevo-Cherkessiia lies just a few kilometres beyond the outskirts of the town. While the population of Kislovodsk is majority Russian, that of the settlement of Mirnyi ('Peaceful'), just below the Kol'tso-gora, and still inside Stavropol' krai, is overwhelmingly Karachai. It was founded in 1957 by Karachai families returning after their wartime deportation to Central Asia. For those of us working on the excavation on the Volch'i vorota, above Klin-Yar, in

autumn 2014, the sound of the call to prayer from the minarets of its mosque would announce the approach of our lunch-break each day (cf. Fig. 3.3).[208]

The physical geography of the Kislovodsk drainage basin is defined by the Borgustan and Dzhinal ridges to the north and east, which together form part of the Pastbishchnyi ('Pastoral') range, and the Skalistii ('Rocky') range to the south and the west (see Map IV). The landscape rises towards the south-west in a *cuesta* formation from the site of the town of the Kislovodsk in the north-east. While the lower parts of this formation are at heights of 600–1500 m above sea level, the upper parts are as high as 1500–2600 m. The *cuesta* is cut by deep river valleys, the most southerly of which is that of the Kich-Malka, which flows eastwards from its source just to the south of Mt. Bol'shoi Bermamyt (2591 m), into the Malka, and ultimately the Terek rivers. The other rivers that cut the *cuesta* (from west to east, the Eshkakon, the Alikonovka and the Berezovaia) are tributaries of the Podkumok, itself a tributary of the Kuma river.[209]

Both the Terek and Kuma rivers drain into the Caspian Sea; while Kislovodsk is significantly closer to the Black Sea coast across the mountains in Abkhazia than the Caspian Sea, it is located just on the eastern side of the watershed dividing the two seas (see Map I). The watershed is traversed by the Gum-Bashi pass, an old route, and now one of the Russian Federation's highest tarmacked roads (2144 m at its highest), linking Kislovodsk with Karachaevsk in the Teberda valley in the upper Kuban river basin, draining towards the Black Sea in the north (see Map VII). Further up the Teberda valley, the Klukhor pass crosses the Great Caucasus Range, dividing the Kuban' basin from the Kodor basin in Abkhazia, draining southwards towards the Black Sea. This pass, known as the Military-Sukhumi Highway, has been closed for general traffic since the Georgian-

[208] On the barrow-covered catacombs at Volch'i vorota, see: D.S. Korobov, V.Iu. Malashev, A.V. Borisov, and J. Fassbinder, 'Rannie alany v Kislovodskoi kotlovine', in N.A. Makarov (ed.), *Institut arkheologii: novye ekspeditsii i proekty* (Moscow, 2015), p. 69.
[209] D.S. Korobov and A.B. Borisov, *Drevnee i srednevekovoe zemledelie v Kislovodskoi kotlovine: itogi pochvenno-arkheologicheskikh issledovanii* (Moscow, 2013), pp. 12–13.

Abkhazian war of 1992–3.[210] However, one season, after working with the Kislovodsk archaeological expedition, the Abkhazian archaeologist Nikolai Voronov walked back along this route to his native Sukhumi from Kislovodsk in a mere seven days.[211]

The Kislovodsk basin lies at the intersection of the themes of this thesis: mountains, steppes and empires. Throughout its history it has been open to influences from the steppes to the north and the mountains to the south, from the empires and regional economies of the Black Sea to the west and the Caspian Sea to the east. None of the written sources discussed in this thesis can be shown to refer unequivocally to the Kislovodsk Basin. Nonetheless, the rich material culture uncovered by archaeologists in its burial sites, settlement layers and worked fields make clear its connections to those worlds, and enable us to approach some of the questions raised by those sources with different classes of evidence.

At the same time, archaeological research carried out in this region over the past century and a half, and in particular in the past two decades, has raised issues that go beyond the field of interest of soldiers and administrators working for emperors and caliphs in Constantinople or Baghdad. The basic systems of food production in the North Caucasus in the first millennium of our era were of less concern to the authors and compilers of the texts surveyed so far than the potential of the region to provide slaves or mercenaries, or access to more distant commerce or strategic outposts. However, for the inhabitants of the region, nothing was more crucial. In the case of the Kislovodsk basin, work in recent years, culminating in soil scientist Andrei Borisov and archaeologist Dmitrii Korobov's 2013 monograph *Drevnee i srednevekovoe zemledelie v Kislovodskoi kotlovine: itogi pochvenno-arkheologicheskikh issledovanii* ('Ancient and Medieval Agriculture in the Kislovodsk Basin: Results of Soil-Scientific and Archaeological Investigations'),

[210] Derlugian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer*, pp. 267 – 73; P. Gahrton, *Georgia. Pawn in the New Great Game* (London, 2010), pp. 64–71.
[211] Personal communication, Dmitrii Korobov.

places us in a unique position to understand this fundamental aspect of human existence in the region.

This chapter asks how the changes in basic systems of food production related to the socio-political structures of the region, and, if at all, to those of the wider world. The stratigraphy of several significant fortified sites within the Kislovodsk Basin reveals a destruction layer and evidence of re-planning in around the eighth century. Two important cemeteries also appear to have ceased to function during the same period. Explanations for the situation that invoke large-scale Alan migrations from the Kislovodsk Basin to the Don River as a consequence of the 'Arab-Khazar' wars, common in the literature, will need to be revised in the light of the previous chapter's conclusions. It will also be necessary to consider alternative reconstructions of the social structure of the region, before and after the eighth century. How much central planning underlay the relatively dispersed pattern of settlement and agriculture of the earlier period? How far can the eighth- to ninth-century pattern be connected to a period of Khazar hegemony? What explains the re-emergence of 'Alan' elites in the tenth century? In the absence of documentary sources, any account of the social relations of production is necessarily a reconstruction, but evidence for the intensification and abatement of agrarian and pastoral production can be usefully compared with the representations of social difference in material culture, whether in burial rites or architecture.

3.2 History from the soil and from the air

Investigation of the ecological relationship between the steppes and mountains of southern Russia has had urgent practical motivations since the nineteenth century. The work of Vasilii Vasil'evich Dokuchaev (1846–1903), considered in Russia the originator of modern genetic soil

science is a point in case.[212] Trained as a geologist, Dokuchaev joined a group working on a soil map of European Russia in 1875.[213] Working on the black earth (*chernozem*) soils of the south Russian steppe zone, he concluded that soil needed to be treated as an organic matrix, formed by a combination of 'five soil forming factors: climate, parent material, organisms, topography, and time'.[214] Dokuchaev led a major expedition to the steppes following the catastrophic harvest failures of 1891–2. The importance of Dokuchaev's work was appreciated by other scientists such as Dmitrii Mendeleev.[215] Subsequent expeditions took Dokuchaev to the Caucasus Mountains, where he began to investigate the variety of soils at different altitudes, enabling him to create a 'vertical' soil map to complement the 'horizontal' map of predominant soil types at different latitudes.[216] Expeditions in 1898–9 took him across the Caucasus, from the Black Sea coast to the Caspian, crossing between its northern and southern slopes in three places, and leaving rich descriptions of its soil, vegetation and human exploitation. Dokuchaev emphasised the importance of human activity in shaping the landscape, and the sheer range of soil formations created by the microclimatic, geological and topographical variation that shapes the ecological complexity of the mountain regions, with important implications for the pastoral as well as the agrarian economy.[217]

The agrobiodiversity of mountain regions became a major theme of the work of plant pathologist Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov (1887–1943), whose fieldwork on five continents also included

[212] Typically, there are both US and Russian claims to priority in the modern field, but human knowledge about soil goes back much further (ca. 11,000 years): E.C. Brevik and A.E. Hartemink, 'Early Soil Knowledge and the Birth and Development of Soil Science', *Catena*, 83 (2010), pp. 23–33.
[213] D. Moon, 'The Environmental History of the Russian Steppes: Vasilii Dokuchaev and the Harvest Failure of 1891', *TRHS*, 15 (2005), pp. 149–74.
[214] Brevik and Hatermink, 'Early Soil Knowledge', p. 29.
[215] Letter of January 1895, quoted in V.V. Dokuchaev, *Sochineniia*, vi (Moscow, 1951), p. 416.
[216] Cf. Braudel's characterisation, borrowed from Strzygowski, of the Mediterranean's mountains as its 'vertical norths': F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. S. Reynolds, 2nd edn, (2 vols., London, 1972–3), i, pp. 26–7.
[217] Dokuchaev, *Sochieniia,* vi, pp. 434–57; P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 80–7.

investigations of plant diversity and historical agriculture in the Caucasus.[218] Vavilov was a small child living in Moscow at the time of the 1891–2 famine, but he came from a family of former peasants who had faced the devastating effects of previous crop failures. His life's work was dedicated to combining modern scientific knowledge about plant pathology and genetics with careful seed collection and observation of the farming practices in mountain regions that produced resilient polycultures that he believed could provide the key to solving the problem of food security more broadly. Cruelly, his own fate was to be made into a scapegoat for the famines of 1931–2, and to end up starving to death in prison in Saratov. His legacy, in the form of his precious seed collection survived the Leningrad siege due to the heroism of his former colleagues, but also lives on in the wealth of notes on plants, and the people who grew them. His sensitivity to cultural ecology as well as plant pathology have provided inspiration to people in our own time concerned to restore resilience to our food system. He also recognised the importance of the Caucasus, and its ancient systems of terraced agriculture, to the global history of agriculture, even arguing that 'it is impossible to understand the evolution of wheat and rye without the Caucasus.'[219]

If Vavilov's fieldwork in the mountains depended on 'a mule and the capacity to learn from the custodians of the seeds', a third lineage for the research discussed in this chapter can be drawn from a man who made use of a very different type of technology: the biplane.[220] O.G.S. Crawford (1886–1957) had had his first experience of aerial photography taking pictures of the enemy front line in France during World War I, and was quick to make use of aerial photography after joining the Ordinance Survey in 1920.[221] Through his collaboration with the entrepreneur Alexander

[218] G. Nabhan, *Where Our Food Comes From. Retracing Nikolay Vavilov's Quest to End Famine* (Washington, 2009).
[219] N.I. Vavilov, 'Gornoe zemledelie Severnogo Kavkaza i perspektivy ego razvitiia (Iz rabot sel'skokhoziaistvennoi gruppy kompleksnoi ekspeditsii AN SSSR)', *Izvestiia AN SSSR. Seriia biologicheskaia*, 5 (1957), p. 598.
[220] K.B. Wilson, foreword to Nabhan, *Where Our Food Comes From*, p. xiii.
[221] K. Hauser, *Bloody Old Britain: O.G.S. Crawford and the Archaeology of Modern Life* (London, 2008); A. MacGregor, 'An Aerial Relic of O.G.S. Crawford', *Antiquity*, 74:283 (2000), pp. 87–100.

Keiller (1889– 1955), Crawford pioneered the application of aerial photography to landscape archaeology. In their joint publication, *Wessex from the Air* (1928), Crawford and Keiller demonstrated how aerial photography could reveal traces of ancient field systems and other types of landscape use that would not be picked up by the naked eye from ground level. By using a technology that embodied early twentieth-century modernity, Crawford was able to shed light on the lives of ancient people, not through the monumental constructions of their rulers, but through the plots on which they grew their food. The paradox appealed to Crawford.

The combination of soil science, aerial photography and an interest in the ecology of mountain agriculture has borne fruit in the Kislovodsk basin in part due to a chance observation by archaeologists working on Rim Gora ('Rome Hill') in 1958.[222] Rim Gora is a natural rock formation 1094 m high, which dominates a section of the north-west of the basin, over the Podkumok River. Its sides were artificially escarped in the early middle ages and the traces of fortifications and its cemetery have been a subject of archaeological interest since the nineteenth century, and of local legends probably for longer. One evening in 1958, as the sun set, shadows in the landscape revealed cascades of narrow terraces on the surrounding hills. The importance of terraced agriculture in other areas of the North Caucasus, such as Dagestan, where it continues to be practiced in some places, was already recognised, but it had not previously been considered in the context of an area such as the Kislovodsk basin. Prior to the deportation of the Karachai population in 1944, the principal use of this land was, as it is today, for sheep and cattle pasture and for growing hay. However, following intensive investigation on the historical agriculture in the region since the 1990s, we now know this was once a landscape covered in cereal crops.

[222] G.E. Afanas'ev, S.N. Savenko and D.S. Korobov, *Drevnosti Kislovodskoi kotloviny* (Moscow, 2004), pp. 69–70.

3.3 Approaches to migration and mobility

Who planted these crops? The historical reconstruction of land use in the Kislovodsk basin during the first millennium has been tied up with arguments about the migrations of various peoples into, out of, and within the region. This chapter specifically questions the notion of a large-scale emigration of Alans from the North Caucasus to the Don in the eighth century, followed by a resettlement in the tenth, common in the archaeological literature. There are other ways of explaining the disappearance and reappearance of certain patterns of material culture and burial practice. A recent history of colonization, forced deportation and resettlement in the region makes approaches to migration an especially sensitive issue, although they are also contentious within archaeological scholarship more generally. Heinrich Härke has highlighted how differently the debates have worked out in British and German scholarship, while Leo Klejn has been an especially perceptive commentator on the Russian tradition.[223] Gustaf Kossinna's approach to culture-historical archaeology long remained influential in Soviet archaeology, despite condemnations of Kossinna himself. For instance, the following is a definition of 'archaeological culture' that appeared in a Soviet publication in 1965:

> By 'archaeological culture' we understand groupings of archaeological phenomena to which certain ethnic entities undoubtedly correspond. We do not recognize as a culture a 'culture' to which more than a single ethnic community of people corresponds.[224]

Many Soviet archaeologists began to critique this assumption of a direct connection between an 'archaeological culture' and an 'ethnos' in the mid-1960s, but would often end up relying upon it in practice. Even when the notion of an exclusive ethnic community was rejected, the evidence for different ethnic components within a single culture were (and sometimes are) still often read

[223] H. Härke, 'The Debate on Migration and Identity in Europe' [Review of *The Britons* by C.A. Snyder, *Origins of the English* by C. Hills, *The British Settlement of Brittany* by P.-R. Giot, P. Guigon, B. Merdrignac], *Antiquity*, 78:300 (2004), pp. 453–6; id., 'Anglo-Saxon Immigration and Ethnogenesis', *Medieval Archaeology*, 55 (2011), pp. 1–28; L. Klejn. *Soviet Archaeology: Schools, Trends and History,* trans. R. Ireland and K. Windle (Oxford, 2012).

[224] Braichevsky quoted in Klejn, *Soviet Archaeology*, p. 68.

off as a series of traits, rather than understood as contributing to cultural production in a more dynamic fashion.

A case in point is the literature on the relationship of 'Alan' to 'Saltovo-Maiaki' culture. The latter, named after the Upper Saltov and Maiaki cemeteries on the Severskii Donets and Don Rivers, was characterised by Svetlana Pletneva as the 'state culture' of the Khazar Qaghanate.[225] By 'state culture', Pletneva meant the characteristic material culture of peoples tributary to the Khazars – but not necessarily the Khazars themselves. The term is somewhat ambiguous, but it contains the useful implication that similarities in, for instance, styles of ceramic production, in different regions under Khazar hegemony, from the Don River, to the Kislovodsk Basin, to Dagestan, and the Volga River, may be evidence of interregional political and economic integration, rather than for the migrations of one particular ethnic group (such as the 'Alans'). Such a concept might even allow for the recognition that there is no way of distinguishing speakers of forms of Turkic, Iranic, Adyghean and other North Caucasian languages within the Qaghanate on the basis of the types of clay pot they made or used.

However, at the very same time, Pletneva argued that specific similarities between ceramic forms and the types of catacomb burials found in sites in the Middle and Lower Don dating from the eighth century, and those found in the Kislovodsk Basin in the preceding period reflected the mass migration of the bearers of the 'Alan variant of Saltovo-Maiaki culture' from the North-West Caucasus to the Don. She linked this with the upheavals caused by the 'Arab-Khazar' wars.[226] This schema continues to find widespread acceptance in Russian archaeological scholarship. Many of the same archaeologists have worked at burial sites in the Kislovodsk Basin and in the Don Region, and their reconstructions of the historical context for both groups of sites are linked by the question of Alan migration and the relationship of the Alans to the Khazars.[227] Modern

[225] S.A. Pletneva, *Ot kochevii k gorodam: saltovo-maiatskaia kul'tura* (Moscow, 1967).
[226] Pletneva, *Ot kochevii*, pp. 71–91, fig. 23.3, p. 89.
[227] G.E. Afanas'ev, *Donskie alany. Sotsial'nye struktury alana-asso-burtasskogo naseleniia basseina Srednogo Dona* (Moscow, 1993); id., *Naselenie lesostepnoi zony basseina Srednego Dona v VIII-X vv.*

genetic techniques are now being employed to pursue these questions.[228] Different settlement layers at fortified sites such as Ukazatel' have been interpreted as showing the sequence of occupation by Alans, Bulgars and then Alans once again, with the interpretations hinging both on site layout and the attribution of ceramic items such as the 'cauldrons with internal ears'.[229]

The classic presentation of Pletneva's interpretation of Saltovo-Maiaki culture and her argument for a migration from the Kislovodsk Basin to the Don Basin was in her work *Ot kochevii k gorodam* ('From Nomad Encampments to Cities'), in which she argued for a stadial development from pastoral nomadism to settled urbanism. Countless ethnographic studies have demonstrated the flaws with the approach to pastoral production, nomadic patterns of migration and temporary settlement, and nomadic ritual and ideology, inherent in such a model.[230] A teleological approach misses the interdependence of pastoral and agrarian production, of the people engaged in each or both in different combinations, and of the frequency with which people have moved to and from different positions on the spectrum.

Schematic oppositions between nomads and settled peoples, and accounts of mass migrations of whole peoples obscure other patterns of mobility: localised, seasonal, mediating kinship ties and small-scale. The changes visible in the burial and settlement archaeology around the eighth century in the Kislovodsk Basin do not necessarily reflect a mass exodus of the 'Alan' population, but they may still indicate a significant change in the social structure, reflecting new patterns of

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(alanskii variant saltovo-maiatskoi kul'tury (Moscow, 1987); G.E. Afanas'ev, M.V. Dobrovol'skaia, D.S. Korobov and I.K. Reshetova, 'O kul'turnoi, antropologicheskoi i geneticheskoi spetsifike donskikh alan', in *E.I. Krupnov i razvitie arkheologii Severnogo Kavkaza* (Moscow, 2014), pp. 312 – 15. Flerov's theories about Alan use of post-burial rituals, were first developed in the context of the Don Alans: V.S. Flerov, 'Obezvrezhivanie pogrebennykh v Severnom Predkavkaz'e i na Donu v I-VIII vv. n.e.', in *Problemy arkheologii Iugo-Vostochnoi Evropy. Tezisy dokladov* (Rostov-na-Donu, 1998).

[228] e.g. G.E. Afanas'ev, M.V., Dobrovol'skaia, D.S., Korobov, and I.K. Reshetova, 'O kul'turnoi, antropologicheskoi i geneticheskoi spetsifike donskikh alan', in Korobov (ed.), *E.I. Krupnov i razvitie,* pp. 312–15; on the problem of using new methods to pursue old-fashioned questions: G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 450–2.

[229] See §3.5 below.

[230] Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, pp. 1–25, 198–202, 231–3; R. Tapper, *Pasture and Politics. Economics, Conflict and Ritual among Shahsevan Nomads of Northwestern Iran* (London, 1979)**,** pp. 1–25; id., *Frontier Nomads of Iran. A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan* (Cambridge, 1997)**,** pp. 327–30.

tribute extraction. In the previous chapter, it was argued that conventional accounts of the 'Arab-Khazar wars' do not accurately represent the economic and political linkages that were established between steppe nomads, highlanders and Muslim frontier settlements in the late Umayyad period, and that persisted into the 'Abbāsid period. The expansion of trade between 'Abbāsid centres and the northern world in the ninth century was in part an outgrowth of the militarised patterns of tribute extraction and exchange within the North Caucasus established in the eighth century.

3.4 Cemeteries

There has been a traditional bias towards burial archaeology over settlement or landscape archaeology in this region. This has partly been due to the way formal archaeological research has found itself chasing in the footsteps of people looking for buried treasure under the *kurgan*-mounds that dot the landscape; but partly also due to the hopes invested in culture-historical archaeology as the key to the questions outlined above about great migrations. In this, and the next chapter, a number of burial sites in the Kislovodsk Basin, and further afield, will be discussed with a view to the information they can provide about 'strategies of distinction' regarding ethnicity alongside questions of social stratification, gender, occupation, the life course and relations with other peoples.[231] The cemeteries reveal the use of ideological resources from the steppe cultures to the north and the agrarian empires to the south, and a simultaneous concern to mark a local identity, shaped in relationship to the historic landscape of the Kislovodsk Basin itself.

Near the modern village of Nezhinsk, across the Podkumok from Mirnyi, a rock shaped like a blade, known as Klin-Yar, is surrounded by a series of burial grounds dating from the Late Bronze

[231] W. Pohl, 'Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity', in W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300 – 800* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 17–69.

Age/Early Iron Age to the Early Middle Ages. Traces of a Bronze Age open settlements, and of early medieval fortified settlements on the top of the rock, have also been investigated.[232] The different phases at this site are conventionally labelled 'Koban' (around the 10th–4th centuries BCE), 'Sarmatian' (around the 2nd century BCE to the 4th/5th centuries CE) and 'Alanic' (4th/5th–8th centuries CE). Härke and Belinskii note that their uses of 'Sarmatian' and 'Alan' designations are 'primarily as chronological, not as ethnic labels'.[233] During the Koban period, people were buried in individual rectangular pit graves with grave-goods, often surrounded and sometimes covered with stones. Gender differences were marked both in the orientation of the bodies, and in the types of grave-good. In the Sarmatian period, burials were in catacombs: underground chambers, led to by an entrance hole, usually referred to as a *dromos* in the literature. Burials tended to be individual, although paired burials are found in the later end of the period, and gender was only marked through grave goods. The burials vary much more in the Sarmatian phase than in the following, Alanic phase. The practice of catacomb inhumation continued, but the constructions were larger, and used for more people: gender was marked in the grave goods ensembles, although it is made complicated to trace by the multiple inhumations of this period.[234]

The problems with using migration as an explanation for cultural change are illustrated by the genetic analysis of skeletal remains from Klin-Yar, where a greater change in male and female phenotypes between the Sarmatian and Alan phases than between the Koban and Sarmatian phases, despite the greater ritual continuity between the latter phases. [235] Scientific analysis of

[232] Klin-Yar 1 (early medieval fortification): IA (RAN), R-1. 5433 (Kovalevskaia, 1973); R-1. 6209 (Kovalevskaia, 1976); G.E. Afanas'ev, 'Poseleniia VI-IX vv. raiona Kislovodska' [Settlements of the Sixth to Ninth Centuries. Kislovodsk Region], *SA,* 3, (1975), pp. 53–62; Klin-Yar 1a, 2, 3 (Koban era open settlements) and 1b (Early medieval open settlement): IA (RAN), R-1 No. 9399 (Flerov, 1985); V.S. Flerov, 'Kobanskie i alanskie pamiatniki pod Kislovodskom', *AO-1983 g* (1985), p. 131.
[233] H. Härke, and A. Belinskij, 'Causes and Contexts of Long-term Ritual Change. The Iron Age to Early Medieval Cemetery of Klin-Yar (North Caucasus, Russia)', in H. Ingvaldsen, J. Rasmus Brandt, M. Prusac and H. Roland (eds.), *Death and Changing Rituals: Function and Meaning in Ancient Funerary Practices* (Oxford, 2015), p. 95.
[234] Härke and Belinskij, 'Causes and Contexts', pp. 95–9.
[235] Härke and Belinskij, 'Causes and Contexts', p. 101; cf. V.S. Flerov, *Alany Tsentral'nogo Predkavakaz'ia V-VIII vekov: Obriad obezvrezhivaniia pogrebennykh. Trudy Klin-Iarskoi ekspeditsii,* 1 (Moscow, 2000), p. 61.

skeletal can perhaps be more productively employed to provide evidence of changing diets, indicating, for instance, a diet more characteristic of agriculturalists in the 'Koban' and 'Alan' periods, and a diet more characteristic of pastoralists in the 'Sarmatian' period.[236] Härke and Belinskij suggest that changes in the mortuary ritual can be correlated with this evidence for economic change: they hypothesise that the greater standardisation of ritual and the more sharply marked gender differences in the in the Koban and Alan periods might be connected to their system of agricultural production; and that the emergence of collective tombs in the Alan period may reflect ideas about family structure, which were in turn connected with patterns of landholding that emerged in the region after the fifth century.[237]

The history of interactions between Iranian-speaking nomads of the steppes (referred to in the archaeological literature by such labels as 'Sarmatian', 'Sarmato-Alan', 'proto-Alan', etc.) and the inhabitants of the mountains was a long one, and evidently involved the development of numerous social groups which, in so far as they defined themselves in ethnic terms, drew upon elements of material culture with various roots in the mountain, piedmont and steppe zones: 'the "Sarmato-Alan" grouping that lived in the Caucasus was not identical to the "Sarmato-Alan" grouping of the steppes, since the penetration of Iranian-speaking Sarmatians into the mountains was not a single act, but a lengthy process.'[238] Burial rites, including the construction of catacomb burials, with or without barrows over them, provided one means by which groups marked their identity.[239] The adoption of some rites may have accompanied groups of people from nomadic backgrounds deciding to adopt sedentary lifestyles, but this was not necessarily a one-way process, and suggestions in the literature that the replacement of barrow catacombs with flat

[236] T. Higham, R. Warren, A. Belinskij, H. Härke and R. Wood, 'Radiocarbon Dating, Stable Isotope Analysis, and Diet-Derived Offsets in 14C Ages from the Klin-Yar Site, Russian North Caucasus', *Radiocarbon*, 52:2-3 (2010), pp. 653–70.
[237] Härke and Belinskij, 'Causes and Contexts', pp. 100–2.
[238] M.P. Abramova, *Rannie alany Severnogo Kavkaza III-V vv. n.e.* (Moscow, 1997), p. 141.
[239] Therefore, 'it is not necessary to search for a single source for the emergence of the catacomb rite and to connect its spread only with large movements of peoples': T.A. Gabuev, 'Nekotorye voprosy etnicheskoi istorii Tsentral'nogo Predkavkaz'ia v sarmatskoe vremia', *RA* (1997), 3, p. 75.

catacombs represents evidence for 'sedentarization' ought to be treated with care.[240] Khazanov emphasises the psychological and social obstacles to sedentarization. Nomads who did decide to settle would have had to wrestle with the breaking and remaking of habits and social ties, and the ways they mediated this through their burial rites would have varied.[241]

The large barrow catacomb cemeteries, attributed to the 'Alans', found in sites from the northern edge of the Kislovodsk Basin to the piedmonts of Chechnya, dating from the second to fourth centuries CE, illustrate the limitations of invasion and mass migration models.[242] The barrow catacomb cemeteries include some fabulously richly furnished burials, and were often located close to substantial fortified 'proto-urban' sites with earth ramparts dating to the same period.[243] 'Proto-urban' sites such as Alkhan-Kala (Chechnya), Zilgi, Brut and Kievskoe (North Ossetia), Nizhnii Dzhulat (Kabardino-Balkaria), Energetik (Piatigorsk region) occupied areas of up to 1.5 km^2, and often had complex plans, with citadels, living quarters, evidence for high-quality ceramic production.[244] After the later fourth century, the elite burials at Zilgi stop, but the cemetery continued to function, and very richly furnished burials continue at Brut.[245] The account in Ammianus Marcellinus of the Huns displacing the Alans (whom he describes as nomads) from the

[240] Gabuev, 'Nekotorye voprosy', p. 73. While Maia Abramova wrote of a 'process of sedentarization', her approach in practice suggested multiple processes by emphasising the deep history of contacts between steppe and mountain zones, calling into question sharp distinctions between an Iranian nomadic and an indigenous settled material culture: M.P. Abramova, *Podkumskii mogil'nik* (Moscow, 1987), p. 178.
[241] Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World,* pp. 198–202.
[242] Barrow catacomb burials of a type common further east have recently been found through magnetometry on the left bank of the river Podkumok in the Kislovodsk Basin: D.S. Korobov, V.Iu. Malashev and J. Faßbinder, 'Predvaritel'nye rezul'taty raskopok na kurgannom mogil'nike Levopodkumskii 1 bliz Kislovodska' *KSIA*, 232 (2014), pp. 120–35. These are quite different from the types of flat burial catacombs found at the nearby cemetery of Podkumok in the preceding period: Abramova, *Rannie alany*, pp. 8, 137; id., *Podkumskii mogil'nik,* pp.108–9; id., 'Rezul'taty raboty na Podkumskom mogil'nike', *AO-1974* (1975), p. 86; Gabuev, 'Komu prinadlezhali', p. 79; Malashev, 'Kul'turnaia situatsiia', pp. 497–500, as well as from the simpler contemporary burial constructions found higher up in the Kislovodsk Basin: D.S. Korobov, 'Pogrebal'nyi kompleks nachala III v. n.e. iz Kislovodskoi kotloviny', *RA* (2010), 1, pp. 138–48.
[243] D.S. Korobov, ''Etapy zaseleniia Kislovodskoi kotloviny po dannym arkheologii', *KSIA,* 228 (2013), pp. 19–33; T.A. Gabuev and V.Iu. Malashev, *Pamiatniki rannikh alan tsentral'nykh raionov Severnogo Kavkaza* (Moscow, 2009), pp. 163–4.
[244] T.A. Gabuev, *Alanskie kniazheski kurgany V v. n.e. u sela Brut v Severnoi Osetii* (Vladikavkaz, 2014), pp. 76–86; V.Iu. Malashev, 'Kul'turnaia situatsiia v tsentral'nykh raionakh Severnogo Kavkaza vo II-IV vv. n.e.', in *Tri chetverti veka. D.V. Deopiku – druz'ia i ucheniki* (Moscow, 2007), pp. 487–9.
[245] Gabuev, *Alanskie kniazheskie kurgany*, p. 81; id. 'Komu prinadlezhali kurgany u cela Brut?', in *Tri chetverti veka*, pp. 473–81.

steppes north of the Caucasus in the 370s cannot be expected to give a full or reliable basis for explaining the changes at such sites.[246] The effect of Hunnic imperialism appears to have led to the collapse of traditional elites in some areas of the North Caucasus but not others.[247]

From the fifth century, flat T-shaped catacombs, rather than barrow catacombs became standard within the cemeteries of the Kislovodsk Basin.[248] This was the period in which the standardisation of burial rites and inventories at Klin-Yar III identified by Härke and Belinskii occurred, and it is to this period that the earliest burials at the cemetery of Mokraia Balka are dated.[249] Analysis of the inventories of 56 male burials and 70 female burials from the Kislovodsk Basin dated to this period enabled Dmitrii Korobov to distinguish between four groups of male burials and three groups of female burials. Male burials were often accompanied by horse harnesses (11% of cases), sabres or swords (14%), bows, quivers or arrow-heads (9%), knives (65%), buckles (33%) or belt fittings (36%). Bronze cauldrons (9%) and glass vessels (5%) were almost exclusively found in the first, elite, group of six male burials.[250] Meanwhile, analysis of the burial rites indicated that elite male burials were marked by the presence of a niche in the catacomb chamber and a pit at the entrance into the chamber, as well as by a greater width of the dromos, and greater width and length of the chamber. Horses were only found in the first group, with two exceptions. However, differences between the other three groups were not sharply marked.[251] Meanwhile,

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[246] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, xxxi, 3.1–3 (ed. Rolfe, iii, pp. 394–6).
[247] Cf. L. Hedeager, 'Scandinavia and the Huns: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Migration Era', *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, 40:1 (2007), pp. 42–58; J. Howard-Johnston, J., 'Comments on Lotte Hedeager: Scandinavia and the Huns', *Norwegian Archaeological Review,* 40:2 (2007), pp. 199–207.
[248] Abramova, *Rannie alany*, pp. 104–5.
[249] See above; V.Iu. Malashev, *Keramika rannesrednevekovogo mogil'nika Mokraia Balka* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 38–9; G.E. Afanas'ev, 'Khronologiia mogil'nika Mokroi Balki', *KSIA*, 158 (1979), pp. 43–51; G.E. Afans'ev and A.P. Runich, *Mokraia Balka.* 1: *Dnevnik raskopok* (Moscow, 2001), p. 38.
[250] D.S. Korobov, *Sotsial'naia organizatsiia alan Severnogo Kavkaza IV-IX vv.* (St. Petersburg, 2003), pp. 194–205. Bronze cauldrons disappear from catacomb burials in the Kislovodsk Basin from the sixth/seventh century (they appear later at Klin-Yar III than elsewhere). Ceramic cooking pots appear in settlement layers in the region in subsequent centuries. The latter have traditionally, and probably erroneously, been connected with the arrival of a Bulgar population: A.P. Runich, 'Zakhoronenie vozhdia epokhi rannego srednevekov'ia iz kislovodskoi kotloviny', *SA* (1976), 3, p. 265; Korobov, *Sotsial'naia organizatsiia*, p. 245.
[251] Korobov correlates the difference between his clusters II and IV among the male burials with a chronological change, rather than a difference in social status. Here, Korobov is working with the chronology established by Afanas'ev: Korobov, *Sotsial'naia organizatsiia*, pp. 220–60. The slightly modified chronology established by Malashev and Gavritukhin would not affect Korobov's conclusions. Moreover,

female burials were grouped into three clusters based on the presence of belt buckles, knives, charcoal, belt fittings, bracelets, small boxes, amulets, coins, clothes straps, cowry shells, cosmetic spoons, large mirrors, cosmetic brushes, other toiletries, bronze bells, bags, small mirrors, head dressings, chains, sheep or goat bones. Both analysis of inventory and of specifics of burial construction indicated an absence of sharp social differentiation.[252]

Of the elite men identified through Korobov's cluster analysis, three of them were buried alongside women assigned to the less clearly delineated cluster of 28 wealthier, or higher-status women. All three were from the 'elite plot' at Klin-Yar III, an area 33m long and 10m wide, located about 150m south-south-east of the eastern limit of the central rock at Klin-Yar.[253] Excavations by Härke and Belinskii revealed that a series of especially richly furnished burials from both the 'Sarmatian' and 'Alan' phases are concentrated in the same area of this cemetery.[254] No such spatial differentiation of elite and non-elite burials has been identified at the Mokraia Balka and Lermontovskaia Skala-2 cemeteries where particularly richly furnished graves were also found.[255]

Malashev emphasises that the different correlations between metal objects and ceramics in their scheme, compared to Afanas'ev's, merely demonstrate that different classes of objects have different 'rhythms of evolution': Afanas'ev and Runich, *Mokraia Balka,* pp. 52–3; Malashev, *Keramika,* p. 25 n. 12. Malashev's observation evokes the concept of *chaînes operatoires*: changes in the production of different items cannot be reduced to the taste of the users: A. González-Ruibal, *An Archaeology of Resistance. Materiality and Time in an African Borderland* (Lanham, 2014), pp. 33–40.

[252] Ceramics, brooches, fibulae, earrings, beads and rings were present in almost all the female burials and hence made distinctions between clusters difficult: Korobov, *Sotsial'naia organizatsiia,* pp. 205–19.

[253] Catacombs 352, 357 and 360 at Klin-Yar III: Korobov, *Sotsial'naia organizatsiia*, pp. 219–20.

[254] H. Härke and B. Belinskij, 'Nouvelles fouilles de 1994–6 dans la nécropole de Klin-Yar', in M. Kazanski and V. Soupault (eds.) *Les Sites archéologiques en Crimée et au Caucase durant l'Antiquité tardive et le haut Moyen Age* (Köln, 2000), pp. 197–205.

[255] Lermontovskaia-2, catacomb 10 contained the skeletons of a man, a woman and a youth. The skulls showed traces of deliberate deformation. The inventory included a bronze kettle, a range of glass and ceramic vessels, belt decorations and clasp with gold foil and almandine and glass insertions, silver, bronze and gold buckles, an incrusted sword hilt, an iron hook, iron scissors, an iron knife, iron horse bit and bridle, with bronze and gold-foil decorations, a crystal ball, a paste pendant, silver toiletries, gold plates with almandine insertions, a mirror, beads from precious stones, shells and glass. The burial is dated to the 4th-5th centuries by Runich, and to the 5th century by Korobov: A.P. Runich, 'Zakhoronenie vozhdia epokhi rannego srednevekov'ia iz kislovodskoi kotloviny', *SA* (1976), 3, pp. 256–66. Mokraia Balka, catacomb 113 contained a male skeleton with a deformed skull. He was buried with an iron sabre with a cross-shaped handle. As well as containing a series of ceramic vessels, bronze belt decorations, covered in gold foil, bronze bracelets, earrings, plaques, an anthropomorphic amulet pendant, buckles, amber, carnelian, paste and jet beads, the burial apparently contained six silver coins. The publication gives no details on the coins besides the name of two Sasanian and two East Roman emperors: Khosrow I (r. 531–79), Khosrow II (r. 591–628), Maurice (r. 582–602) and Phokas (r. 602–10). The plans also show a bronze mirror. The burial is

Among an exceptional group of burials at the Klin-Yar 'elite plot', two in particular stand out. A number of the richer burials include horse inhumations, but catacomb 360 includes two horse skins in the upper part of its *dromos* filling and an entire horse skeleton and in the base of its *dromos.* There is also a belt buckle in the upper part of the *dromos* filling, and a ceramic vase in the base. Its funerary chamber is the longest and deepest in the cemetery, a very regular oval shape, sealed with two entrance stones. Bones from a fourth horse deposition were found in the upper filling of the funerary chamber. At the base of the chamber, two human skeletons were found, undisturbed. A man, with cranial deformation and a small gold earring from his left ear, was buried with a sheathed 'Avar' sword, a belt with gold and silver decorations, and an iron bit, an iron stirrup, a gold horseshoe, and an entire horse harness in bronze and silver. Turned towards him was a woman with Byzantine-style gold earrings, a gold brooch, a bronze mirror, beads and a bag of bronze hair decorations. Between the male skeleton and the entrance was a large bronze cauldron, a chain-mail breastplate, a belt and 15 arrow heads. At the base of the chamber were also found a series of ceramic vessels, another belt decoration in gold and a Byzantine glass cup. The burial is datable to the seventh century.[256]

A second burial of particular interest from this site is catacomb 341, in which three people were buried with an inventory that included a *solidus* of the Emperor Maurice (r. 582–602) and a stirrup.[257] Härke and Belinskij suggest a date for the first half of the seventh century for this burial.[258] This would represent an extremely early date for this type of technology, which is

dated ca. 625–700: Afanas'ev and Runich, *Mokraia Balka,* pp. 161, 199–200. Mokraia Balka, catacomb 123 contained a male skeleton, buried with an iron sword 0.88 m long with a hilt decorated with glass incrustrations in a bronze setting. His belt had a bronze buckle. The burial also contained an iron knife, ceramic vessels and a bronze cauldron. The burial is dated ca. 450 – 650: Afanas'ev and Runich, *Mokraia Balka*, pp. 228, 230–1.

[256] Härke and Belinskij, 'Nouvelles fouilles', pp. 202–4.

[257] Härke and Belinskij, 'Nouvelles fouilles', p. 201.

[258] They use Afanas'ev's methodology of calculating average age of coins before deposition: for *solidi* of Maurice in this region, the average 'delay' is 43 years: Afanas'ev and Runich, *Mokraia Balka,* p. 37, table 5. However, it is of course possible for individual coins to remain in circulation for lengths of time that vary dramatically from the mean: Flerov, *Alany Tsentral'nogo Predkavkaz'ia*, pp. 56–7.

thought to have first reached Byzantium from the north in the 590s.[259] The next chapter will take up the question of technological and cultural interchange between this region and the wider world (from Byzantium to the Eurasian steppes) onto which finds such as this open a window. Nonetheless, the question of what such a find might tell us about the social structure of the Kislovodsk Basin in the seventh century is directly pertinent to the current chapter. Especially given our concern in this chapter with the changing agricultural practices of the inhabitants of this region, this find inevitably calls to mind Lynn White's provocative thesis that the introduction of the stirrup and the heavy plough were decisive in the development of feudalism in western Europe from the mid-eighth century.[260] The thesis was challenged by Peter Sawyer and Rodney Hilton, who showed earlier examples of diffusion of both stirrups and heavy ploughs without leading to the social transformations White described, and used this particularly marked example of 'technical determinism' to make a wider arguments about the role of human agency and social conflict in determining the significance of new technologies.[261] Other critiques of the thesis have made similar points, while providing different chronologies of the diffusion of the technology. For instance, Bernard Bachrach challenged the White thesis on the grounds that the stirrups arrived too late to have had the effect on Carolingian warfare attributed to them, while Florin Curta has corrected Bachrach's chronology to demonstrate the presence of stirrups in Avar burials before 650.[262] However, Curta's intention was not to defend White's determinism, but instead to draw attention to the symbolic significance of stirrup depositions in burial contexts:

[259] Härke and Belinskij, 'Nouvelles fouilles', pp. 208–10; references to iron stirrups (σκάλας σιδηρᾶς) in Maurice's *Strategikon* (probably post-592 CE), are the earliest Byzantine attestations: Maurice, *Strategikon*, I, 2, line 41; II, 9, line 23; X, 1, line 52 (ed. Dennis, pp. 80, 128, 340); date: p. 16; cf. VI, Pr., 2 (p. 218): Περὶ Ἀλανικῆς γυμνασίας σχηματικῆς.
[260] L. White, *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford, 1962), p. 56.
[261] P. Sawyer and R. Hilton, 'Technical Determinism: The Stirrup and the Plough' *P&P,* 24:1 (1963), pp. 90–100.
[262] B. Bachrach, 'Charles Martel, Mounted Shock Combat, the Stirrup, and Feudalism', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History,* 7 (1970), pp. 47–75.

> The stirrup did certainly not make one a 'professional' warrior; but in the Early Avar ages, it was employed symbolically to mark that status in burial.[263]

In the case of the burials at the elite plot in Klin-Yar, the stirrups indicate new technologies were being employed to mark an elite male identity to which mounted warfare was central. Important changes in production had occurred in this region since the pre-Hunnic period, including in the breeding of the horses themselves: analysis of the horse bones in catacombs 341 and 345 revealed the crossing of breeds from the eastern steppe regions with local breeds.[264] However, if the stirrup burial indicates the borrowing of an aspect of elite style recently introduced to the region from the steppes to the north, the continuous re-use of the ancient Klin-Yar site simultaneously emphasised a local elite identity.

This raises the question of what caused the break in these continuities at such sites. Most chronologies of the cemeteries Klin-Yar III and Mokraia Balka cemeteries indicate that they fell out of use after the early eighth century, although Vera Kovalevskaia has dated a series of catacombs at Mokraia Balka to the later eighth and ninth centuries.[265] As in the case of the earlier barrow catacombs, the change does not appear to have happened in the same way everywhere. Beginning from the seventh century, new types of burials cut into rock faces ('*skal'nye'* or 'rock' burials) appear.[266] These were synchronous with the final catacombs at Mokraia Balka and Klin-Yar, as well as with the catacombs that people were digging at Rim Gora in the tenth to twelfth centuries, but were also functioning during a period in the eighth to ninth centuries when people were apparently not using catacomb burials in the region.[267] The next chapter will look in more detail at such rock burial in the wider North-West Caucasus. The reasons for the adoption of this

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[263] F. Curta, 'The Earliest Avar-age Stirrups, or the "Stirrup Controversy" Revisited', in F. Curta (ed.), *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages: Avars, Bulgars,Khazars and Cumans* (Leiden, 2008), p.320.
[264] A.B. Belinskii, 'Klin-Iarskii mogil'nik v sisteme sinkhronnykh pamiatnikov vostochnoi i tsentral'noi Evropy', in Z.Kh. Albegova and Kh.M. Mamaev (eds.), *Voprosy drevnei i srednevekovoi arkheologii Kavkaza* (Moscow, 2011), p. 126.
[265] V.B. Kovalevskaia, 'Khronologiia alanskikh katakomb VI-IX vv na osnovanii analiza ikh konstruktivnykh detalei', *KSIA*, 158 (1979), pp. 38–43; Afanas'ev, 'Khronologiia', pp. 43–51.
[266] A.P. Runich, 'Skal'nye zakhoroneniia v okrestnostiakh Kislovodska', *SA* (1971), 2, pp. 167–78.
[267] Runich, 'Skal'nye zakhoroneniia', p. 176.

type of construction alongside, and possibly for a time to the exclusion of, the traditional catacombs is unclear: once again, change in ethnicity is not the only possible explanation. The change may not have required dramatic change in burial rites either, and it has been recognised that some of the rock burials may simply represent a continuation of the same tradition using a different part of the landscape.[268]

However, the evidence remains that the cemetery at Klin-Yar, in which high status people from the region had been buried for centuries, appears to have stopped functioning in the eighth century. When flat catacomb burials reappeared in the Kislovodsk Basin, from around the tenth century, they were in another location, concentrated on the eastern slope beneath the Rim Gora rock.[269] Even if the cultural continuities in the Kislovodsk Basin were stronger than has sometimes been suggested between these two periods, an important shift in the landscape of power had occurred. The settlement archaeology of the region may offer some clues as to how, and why, this happened.

3.5 Settlements

It has become increasingly clear that the landscape of the Kislovodsk Basin was covered in small defended settlements in the early middle ages. The number of open settlements still requires further investigation, since it is unclear how many of the sites provisionally identified as open settlements on the basis of ceramic scatters actually represent areas of agricultural

[268] Korobov argues rock burials that are specially cut should be distinguished from those that simply use natural openings. He argues that the former were connected to the traditional catacomb rites, while the latter fell out of use in the eighth to ninth centuries. Korobov questions Runich and Kuznetsov's attribution of one such burial to a 'ninth century Alan noble (*druzhinik*)'. The burial in question contained a sabre, knives, silk bag, glass beads, glass rings, a goat horn, and fragments of a leather belt with silver fittings: D.S. Korobov, 'K voprosu u skal'nykh zakhoroneniiakh Kislovodskoi kotloviny', in *Problemy drevnei istorii i kul'tury Severnogo Kavkaza. Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 2008), pp. 83–99; V.A. Kuznetsov and A.P. Runich, 'Pogrebenie alanskogo druzhinika IX v.', *SA* (1974), 3, pp. 196–202.

[269] The earliest dating material from these catacombs is a coin of Constantine VII and Romanos (joint r. 945–59), in chamber No. 55, catacomb No.52: A.P. Runich, 'Katakomby Rim-Gory', *SA*, 1970 (2), p. 207.

exploitation.[270] What is clear, especially from the work of Dmitrii Korobov, is the proliferation of small, defended households on promontories and escarpments above the Basin's river valleys, along from the confluence of the Alikonovka and Berezovaia with the Podkumok in the north east to the sources of the streams to the south and south east. Most are found well above the valley of the main stream of the Podkumok, on the right bank, between around 1000 and 1500 m above sea-level (cf. Fig. 3.4 and Map IV).[271] This section will consider the relationship between this highly dispersed pattern of settlement and the evidence for a small number of more substantial sites within the Basin.

The construction techniques, associated cemeteries and positioning of a series of sites indicate the presence of an elite within the basin.[272] Irina Arzhantseva, the excavator of one of these sites, Gornoe Ekho, has also emphasised its importance within the settlement structure of the basin, and even suggests it may have been a residence for Sarosios himself (see Map IV). Gornoe Ekho fort is located on an inaccessible small plateau above the Alikonovka River and Lunacharskii Stream in what is now a suburb of Kislovodsk. The fort occupies an area of around 0.7 ha, with fortress walls at the south end of the plateau creating a citadel with an area of 0.1 ha. In the

[270] D. Korobov, 'Early Medieval Settlement in Southern Russia: Changing Directions', *Medieval Archaeology* 56 (2012), p. 48

[271] G.E. Afanas'ev, D.S. Korobov, 'The Ash-Tigors' Granaries and Palaeoclimate of the 7th–12th Centuries in the North Caucasus', *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz* (2007), pp. 666–8, figs. 1–2; Afanas'ev, Korobov and Savenko, *Drevnosti,* pp. 62–3, figs. 13–14

[272] Most of these (Rim-Gora, Klin-Yar, Gornoe Ekho, Kugul'skoe, Pervomaiskoe 1, Tsentral'noe Eshkakonskoe) belong to Korobov's group of sites classified by their topography as 'forts on buttes', all located below 1000 m above sea level: Korobov, 'Early Medieval Settlement', pp. 48–50; Afanas'ev and Korobov, 'Ash-Tigors' Granaries', pp. 667–71. The fortress at Ukazatel' (see below), does not belong to this group, but may also reflect the presence of a local elite. For Rim Gora: see also below. The early medieval fortification at Klin-Yar occupies an area of 0.4 – 0.5 ha on the long thin plateau rock. Almost 360 m of walls covered with earth are preserved on the site. The inhabitants had three cisterns in the fortress. A perpendicular wall separates off a citadel 500 m^2 at the narrowest point of the rock. A short distance to the west of the main fortification is a second, smaller, rock, taller, but more accessible from the open plateau than the main fortification. It has its own cistern 2.2 m in diameter and 1.5m deep. Kovalevskaia suggested this fortification served as a guard post for the main fortified site. Early medieval open settlements have been found on the south slope of the main rock, as well as on the slopes to the east and south, and to the west, of the smaller Klin-Yar rock: Klin-Yar 1 (early medieval fortification): IA (RAN) R-1. 5433 (Kovalevskaia, 1973); R-1. 6209 (Kovalevskaia, 1976); G.E. Afanas'ev, 'Poseleniia VI-IX vv. raiona Kislovodska', *SA* (1975), 3, pp. 53–62; Klin-Yar 1a, 2, 3 (Koban era open settlements) and 1b (Early medieval open settlement): R-1. 9399 (Flerov, 1985); Flerov, 'Kobanskie i alanskie pamiatniki', p. 131.

vicinity are a series of burial sites, both catacomb burials and rock burials, from the 'Sarmatian' period to the ninth century.[273] Around the promontory are stone towers (dimensions 7 m x 8 m – 8 m x 8 m), spaced at about 25–40 m apart, with walls in between. Microscopic analysis of samples from recent excavations revealed the use of cement, not previously thought to be used in Alan constructions, but this may simply be because the material used is so hard to distinguish from the local stone, and so easily blown away.[274] Investigations at other sites are now needed to establish whether this was a much wider-spread feature of Alan stone fortifications. The phase dated by Arzhantseva to the sixth to eighth centuries (based on ceramic and metal finds, and imitation coins) is covered in buildings of around 8 to 20 m^2. The majority appear to have been domestic, although structures with economic, defensive and supportive functions were also identified. The buildings used a combination of stone and wattle constructions. Water was managed with a cistern and drainage channels cut in the ground rock, and the ground rock was flattened between the buildings to form streets and courtyards, indicating a high level of planning. If accommodation was confined to the exclusively domestic buildings, Arzhantseva calculates the site could have been occupied by around 70 to 80 people in this period, but if the towers were also used, this could be increased to 300 to 400 people.[275]

Where Arzhantseva and Korobov differ is in their interpretation of the relationship between 'central places' such as this and the rest of the settlements of the basin. Arzhantseva sees the development of the fortified sites of the Kislovodsk basin essentially as a 'top-down' process, but in any case connected with centralised control of access to the mountain passes.[276] Korobov points to the distribution of small defended settlements on rock promontories, which make up the largest group, in order to challenge this 'top-down' version.[277] These sites are all located at

[273] IA (RAN) R-1. 6209 (Kovalevskaia, 1976).
[274] Microscopic analysis revealed the particles in the cement was less precisely sorted by size and larger than in the sandstone of the main building material: R-1. 24486–7 (Arzhantseva, 2004), pp. 20–3.
[275] I.A. Arzhantseva, 'Kamennye kreposti alan' *RA* (2007), 2, pp. 77–84.
[276] Arzhantseva, 'Kamennye kreposti', pp. 76, 84; Korobov, 'Early Medieval Settlement', pp. 43, 50.
[277] Korobov, 'Early Medieval Settlement', p. 50.

altitudes of between 1000 m and 1500 m above sea level, but often do not particularly correspond to what investigators have tended to assume the main routes across the basin from the mountain passes would have been.[278] These would probably have entered the basin by following the course of the Podkumok from its source, which would have been reached from the other side of the watershed between the Black Sea and the Caspian via the Gumbashi pass.[279] This is roughly the route of the A-157 Karachaevsk Highway today. The distribution of the majority of the fortified sites of the basin over an area to the east and south of this route suggests a less centrally planned emergence.

Recent excavations of Zubchikhinskie fortresses 1 and 3, in the south-east of the basin, add to the picture of multiple relatively autonomous centres within the basin. Both are built on multiple levels of natural rock promontories, with their upper levels at heights of 1323 m and 1446 m above sea-level respectively. Ceramic finds in both fortresses indicate the emergence of settlements from the second or third century CE, with continued occupation to the eighth century, and possibly later. At Zubchikhinskoe-3, rings of stones appear to mark out an assembly place, while the remains of large numbers of burnt bones datable between the fifth and eighth centuries in a building with an altar suggest a cult site. Meanwhile, investigations of the surface of the promontory above Zubchikhinskoe-1 to the south, and on the promontory facing it across the Zubchikhinka gulley, revealed a series of agricultural plots with dividing walls that have been dated by soil analysis to the fifth to eighth centuries (cf. Fig. 3.6).[280]

A third category of forts identified by Korobov, the 'hilltop' forts, covers the only sites at a distance of more than 1000 m from the river network.[281] For the most part, these are found on

[278] However, Ukazatel' is an example of a fortified site on a rock promontory which controlled routes connecting the north of the Kislovodsk Basin with the alpine pastures of the Bermamyt plateau to its south: see below.
[279] P.G. Akritas, 'Drevnii torgovyi put' ot Chernogo moria k Kaspiiskomu po goram Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza', *Uchenye zapiski Kabardino-Balkarskogo Nauchno-Issledovatel'skogo Instituta,* 16 (1959), pp. 202–5, 219.
[280] D.S. Korobov, 'Rannesrednevekovye poseleniia v Zubchikhinskoi balke bliz Kislovodska', *PIFK*, 1:35, (2012), pp. 188–215.
[281] Korobov, 'Early Medieval Settlement', p. 50.

the peripheries of the basin, on the Borgustan range in the north, and the slopes of the Dzhinal range in the east. In the case of the Borgustan fortifications, there does appear to be some central planning, but this may have belonged to the period preceding the picture of dispersed settlement characteristic of the fifth to eighth centuries.[282] Associated ceramic finds indicate that most of them functioned between about the second and fourth centuries. These may have served a defensive function for open settlements located on the left bank of the Podkumok below. [283] After the late fourth century, the open settlements overlooked by the Borgustan ridge ceased to be occupied, and the pattern of smaller fortified sites across the whole of the basin began to emerge. Correspondingly, the hilltop forts above these former open settlements would have lost their original function.[284] However, once again we find some appear to have seen continued use until the eighth century.[285] The reappropriation of these sites in general in the changed context of these later centuries may not have been determined solely by defensive functions. Hajnalka Herold has suggested that the reuse of earlier fortified sites in early medieval central Europe might have been connected with the symbolic significance of reappropriating earlier prestige sites, and not simply with their functionality.[286] Many of the Borgustan fortifications are now severely damaged by robbers, who appear to have taken their mound-shapes for actual burial mounds, and excavated them in hope of precious grave goods. Perhaps these fortifications may also have appeared numinous to inhabitants of the Kislovodsk basin in the second half of the first millennium.

[282] Runich had suggested these were set of signal-posts in 1974, and recent experiments support the conclusion: D.S. Korobov, 'Ukrepleniia epokhi rannego srednevekov'ia na Borgustanskom khrebte bliz Kislovodska', *PIFK,* 1:27 (2010), p. 565; S. Reinhold and D.S. Korobov, 'The Kislovodsk Basin in the North Caucasian Piedmonts – Archaeology and GIS Studies in a Mountain Cultural Landscape', *Preistoria Alpina,* 42 (2007), pp. 199–200, fig. 24.
[283] Korobov, 'Predvaritel'nye rezul'taty', pp. 120–35; cf. his earlier arguments in id., 'Ukrepleniia', pp. 591–2.
[284] Korobov, 'Ukrepleniia', pp. 590–3.
[285] Korobov, 'Ukrepleniia', pp. 590–3.
[286] H. Herold, 'Fortified Settlements of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries AD in Central Europe: Structure, Function and Symbolism', *Medieval Archaeology,* 56 (2012), pp. 66, 78–9.

As we have seen, a major upheaval occurred during the eighth century. Ancient burial sites and the associated settlements appear to have been abandoned at Klin-Yar and Mokraia Balka, while prestige sites such as Gornoe Ekho and Ukazatel' were transformed. Excavations at Gornoe Ekho revealed a destruction layer between the first (sixth to eighth century) and second (ninth to tenth century) phases, 80 cm thick across almost the whole fortress, indicating that structures burnt to the ground. The second phase at Gornoe Ekho, datable to the ninth to tenth centuries by the presence of red clay amphorae from the North Black Sea region, appears to have been characterised by lower intensity occupation, less meticulous construction techniques (not involving the use of cement, for example), and the re-use and restructuring of the old plan and key buildings, including the construction of a round, 'yurt-shaped' building.[287]

A similar situation was found by excavations at Ukazatel', a fortification on a triangular promontory pointing south-west, 100 m above the Alikonovka River, further upstream from Gornoe Ekho, above waterfalls known as the Medovye (Honey) Falls. This is one of a whole series of fortifications with very similar construction above this section of the Alikonovka, governing the route between the Podkumok and the alpine pastures near Khasaut and Mount Bermamyt. The fortified site occupied 9–10 ha of the promontory, whose total area is around 30 ha. A citadel closed off by a 30 m-long perpendicular wall (now a turfed rampart) occupies 0.1 ha. In the rubble to the south of the wall a small mirror-amulet with close eighth to ninth century analogies was found.[288] Structures inside the citadel included a defensive tower, with an area of 30–35 m^2. As at Gornoe Ekho, the ground rock had been deliberately flattened. A flight of eight to ten steps 1 m wide and 5 m long, were cut into the rock, leading to a platform below the citadel. Along the sheer edge was a building of 60–70 m^2 with around eight rooms. An empty area of around 500m^2 at the citadel wall has been interpreted as a livestock enclosure. The site would have been easily

[287] Arzhantseva, 'Kamennye kreposti', p. 84; IA (RAN) R-1. 24486–7 (Arzhantseva, 2004).
[288] Kovalevskaia did not find any trace of mortar in the wall's construction, but this finding may need to be reconsidered in the light of Arzhantseva's excavations at Gornoe Ekho: IA (RAN) R-1. 5403 (Kovalevskaia, 1975); see above.

within sight of a number of the other fortresses and settlements on the plateau even without use of the towers. As at Gornoe Ekho, a destruction layer was found, and first one, and then a second 'yurt-shaped building' had been built over earlier rectangular constructions. Re-use of building materials for the new level had also led to the damage of other older structures. Once again, red clay amphorae datable to the eighth to ninth centuries were found in the later layer. [289]

The destruction layers and changes in the plan at sites such as Gornoe Ekho and Ukazatel' have been interpreted as indicating that Turkic nomads, possibly Bulgars, seized control of such sites in the eighth century.[290] However, Irina Arzhantseva suggests elements such as the 'yurt' structure may indicate the presence of Khazar representatives at these sites, rather than providing evidence for large-scale displacement of an Alan population by incoming Turkic nomads. [291] One of the arguments that has been used to suggest the presence of a Turkic population has been based on the presence of 'clay cauldrons with internal ears' (protrusions on the inside of the rim with holes to enable the pots to be hung over a stove) in eighth- to ninth-century settlement layers in the Kislovodsk Basin. Kuznetsov argued that the form of these pots, not characteristic of the North Caucasus before this period, indicated their use in cooking over an open fire, and suggested they may have been an import by a Bulgar population. Others suggested some of these pots should be dated later and connected with other Turkic peoples, such as the Pechenegs or Polovtsians. However, Afanas'ev has convincingly questioned attempts to associate this type of cooking vessel with a new population.[292] One implication of Afanas'ev's arguments that such

[289] V.B. Kovalevskaia, 'Raskopki alanskoi kreposti v Karachaevo-Cherkessii', *AO-1975 g.* (1976), pp. 125–6; id., 'O rabotakh srednevekovogo otriada Stavropol'skoi ekspeditsii', *AO-1976-g.* (1977) pp. 102–3; IA (RAN) R-1. 5433 (Kovalevskaia, 1973); R-1. 6209 (id., 1976); G.E.Afanas'ev, Kh.K.Bidzhiev, Iu.N.Voronov, B.V.Kovalevskaia, L.N. Sitnikov, L.L.Sitnikova, 'Raboty srednevekovogo otriada severokavkazskoi ekspeditsii', *AO-1973 g.* (1974), p. 96.
[290] V.B. Kovalevskaia, *Kavkaz i alany: veka i narody* (Moscow, 1984), pp. 148–9.
[291] Arzhantseva, 'Kammennye kreposti', pp. 84.
[292] V.A. Kuznetsov, 'Glinianye kotly Severnogo Kavkaza', *KSIA*, 99 (1964), pp. 34–40; Afanas'ev *et al.,* 'Raboty srednevekovogo otriada', p. 96; V.B. Kovalevskaia, 'Arkheologicheskie sledy prebyvaniia drevnikh bolgar na Severnom Kavkaze', in *Pliska-Preslav. Prabulgarskata kultura. Materiali ot bulgaro-suvestskata sreshcha, Shumen, 1976,* 2 (Sofia, 1981), pp. 43–52; G.E. Afanas'ev, 'Otoshchiteli v formovochnoi masse kukhonnoi posudy saltovo-maiatskoi kul'tury kak etnomarkiruiushchii priznak', in V.I. Kozenkova (ed.), *Ocherki srednevekovoi arkheologii Kavkaza: k 85-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia V.A. Kuznetsova* (Moscow, 2013), pp. 34–

vessels could easily have been manufactured and used by the Alan population would be further to call into question the notion that the Alan population entirely evacuated the Kislovodsk Basin during the later eighth and ninth centuries. Rather than suggesting the Alan population emigrated *en masse* and then returned to the Kislovodsk Basin a century and a half later, the evidence implies that sections of an emerging elite were driven out or simply abandoned the region, while others remained behind.

The same considerations apply, therefore, to the fortified site of Ulludorbunla (which means 'Big Caves' in Karachai), on a north-pointing triangular promontory 300 m above the right bank of the Podkumok, 30 km south west of Kislovodsk, and 8 km south of the modern settlement of Tereze in Karachaevo-Cherkessia. Cultural layers with radiocarbon dates for finds of animal bones at different levels indicate the functioning of this fortification from the early (fifth to ninth centuries) to high middle ages (ten to thirteenth centuries). Moreover, carbon dates specifically for the eighth to ninth centuries have been found, as well as round-plan buildings ('yurts') over older rectangular structures, and finds of the characteristic cooking pots with 'internal ears' from this period.[293] This site has been known to archaeologists since the nineteenth century and had been investigated in the 1960s, when a medieval road leading from the right bank of the Podkumok and cut in the rocks was investigated, and the site was dated at that time to the tenth to twelfth centuries.[294] Subsequent investigations reported a settlement below the fortification, where the finds included iron arrowheads, bracelets, knifes, badly preserved sabres, fragments of medieval ceramics, mealing stones, millstones and animal bones, dating from the eighth to eleventh

50; id., 'Kukhonnaia posuda saltovo-maitskoi kul'tury – etnomarkiruiushchii priznak?' *RA*, (2013), 3, pp. 13–25.

[293] D.S. Korobov, 'Ullu-Dorbunla – srednevekovoe gorodishche v verkhov'iakh r. Podkumok', in Kozenkova (ed.) *Ocherki srednevekovoi arkheologii*, pp. 114–39.

[294] IA (RAN) R-1. 26553 (Afanas'ev, 2001); A. Firkovich, 'Arkheologicheskie razvedki na Kavkaze' [1851], *ZIAO*, IX (1857), pp. 380–1.

centuries.[295] Even more intriguingly, the remains of a church on the site were reported.[296] Aerial photographs taken in 1975, examined prior to excavations in 2005 and 2011, revealed perpendicular walls enclosing the tip of the promontory, but also the outline of the rectangular church, with a single rounded apse in its the east wall. The single-nave church was located on an outcrop to the south-east of the fourth of the four walls enclosing the promontory. Its outer dimensions were 17.5 m in length by 6.6 m in width, with walls of 1.5 m thickness. A stone heap to the south-west of the church may represent the ruins of a side-chapel. Buildings on the settlement were mostly grouped in seven areas, with a further freestanding seventeen buildings. Most of the ceramics found in these buildings were datable to the tenth to thirteenth centuries. 186 bones and teeth of animals were found, including three jaw fragments that gave a radiocarbon dating to the eleventh or twelfth to thirteenth centuries.[297]

From around the tenth century, then, Ulludorbunla was a substantial settlement with a Christian church. Calculations based on potentially inhabited areas over 14 ha, offer an estimated population of between 700 and 2,800 people: a comparable population is suggested by Irina Arzhantseva for the tenth- to twelfth-century fortified site of Kiafar in the Upper Kuban' region, although this is significantly smaller than that calculated for the major settlement of Nizhnii Arkhyz in the Bol'shoi Zelenchuk valley a few kilometres to the east.[298] A similar settlement emerged in this period on and around the butte known as Rim Gora, downstream along the Podkumok towards Kislovodsk, at the confluence with the river Eshkakon. The fortification sat on a rock 2.2 km long, with a surface area of 16 ha and sheer slopes with drops of between 3 and 20

[295] Kh.Kh. Bidzhiev and A.V., Gadlo, 'Issledovaniia v Karachaevo-Cherkesskoi avtonomnoi oblasti', *AO-1974 g.* (1975), p. 98.
[296] E.I. Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov i formirovanie torgovykh putei na Severo-Zapadnom Kavkaze v VIII – IX vv. (na materialakh mogil'nika Moshchevoi Balki)' (IA RAN, Moscow, *kandidat nauk* thesis, 1997), p. 145.
[297] Korobov, 'Ullu-Dorbunla', pp. 114–39.
[298] Korobov 'Ullu-Dorbunla', pp. 126–8; I.A. Arzhantseva, 'The Christianization of the North Caucasus (Religious Dualism among the Alans)', in W. Seibt (ed.) *Die Christianisierung des Kaukasus (Armenia, Georgia, Albania): Referate des internationalen Symposions. Vienna, 9 – 12 Dec., 1999* (Vienna, 2002), pp. 23–5; IA (RAN) R-1. 10842-108426 (Bidzhiev, 1985); V.A. Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz v X-XII vekakh. K istorii srednevekovykh gorodov Severnogo Kavkaza* (Stavropol', 1993), p. 260; cf. §5.10 below.

m. It was accessible from the Podkumok valley by a medieval road, 3 m wide, and four sets of steps leading up to the fortress. Access to the fortress from the west side was protected by a rampart; heaped rocks and earth around a spring on the north of the rock face indicated this was also defended. A total of 33 cisterns have been found cut into the bedrock. Three square-based towers and twelve guard rooms have been identified, as well as a central round building. A settlement spread over 117 ha surrounded the fortress from the north and west. Storage pits with grains of wheat, barley, millet were discovered, and finds of grindstones, cattle and sheep bones and ceramics (including the 'internal ear cauldrons'), datable from the tenth to twelfth centuries. The cross-shaped foundation of a Christian church has also been identified in the settlement.[299]

This section compared 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' explanations for the settlement pattern of the Kislovodsk basin between the fifth and eighth centuries CE. Researchers are agreed that sites such as Ukazatel', Klin-Yar and Gornoe Ekho should be seen as 'central places' in this period, but disagree on the extent to which conscious, centralised planning shaped the landscape of the region as a whole. The establishment of small stone fortified sites across much of the Kislovodsk Basin appears to have been the outcome of the decisions of small kinship groups to establish control over limited resource zones. They may have done so in conscious opposition to the emergent elites. This conclusion depends on part on the relative egalitarianism of the funerary rites discussed in the previous section, and in part on the distribution of agricultural land discussed in the following section. The landscape of dispersed small fortified sites with associated field plots does not suggest significant concentrations of landed power; and there is no evidence to suggest significant agricultural surpluses were consumed, stored or marketed at the more prestigious sites in the Kislovodsk Basin. There was, though, some concentration of movable wealth at sites such as Klin-Yar or Gornoe Ekho, indicating privileged access to goods being

[299] Afanas'ev, Savenko and Korobov, *Drevnosti*, pp. 138–9; IA (RAN) R-1. 12026, 12026a (Bidzhiev, 1987); Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', pp. 143–4.

transported through this region or brought into it as the proceeds of raiding, tribute and military alliances. The inhabitants of such central places may have accumulated a degree of wealth due to their political and military hegemony within the Kislovodsk Basin, but were probably not in a position to demand regular surpluses in the form of tax or rent from the majority of inhabitants of the region.

The section has also surveyed discontinuities and continuities between the eighth and tenth centuries, and has questioned a model of large-scale emigration and later return immigration of the Alan population. The evidence of change in the planning and cultural layer at elite sites in the eighth century, and the interruption of burials at elite burial plots may well provide evidence of representatives of Khazar hegemony, and the displacement of some hitherto powerful families. However, it need not mean the wholesale emigration of the population. Meanwhile, the 'Alan' material culture of the occupants of elite sites from the tenth century does not necessarily reflect a reverse wave of immigration from the Don. It may instead reflect a tenth-century transformation of elite styles, involving abandonment of the Turkic styles that had marked elite status in the North Caucasian and south Russian steppes during the period of Khazar hegemony. One way or another, in the tenth century a new elite was emerging, and it was adopting new markers of its connections to the Black Sea world. One sign of this was the presence of crosses, Christian burials and churches at sites such as Ulludorbunla and Rim-Gora.

3.6 Agriculture

Irina Arzhantseva has suggested that the Kislovodsk Basin may have provided the Khazars with a major source of their grain, and that sites at Gornoe Ekho and Ukazatel' may have functioned as

sites of tribute collection during their period of hegemony.[300] The Hebrew letter of 'king Joseph of the Khazars' refers to tribute collected from the Alans, while the *De administrando imperio* (*DAI*) of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos mentions nine regions (κλίματα) of Khazaria 'adjacent to Alania' (τῃ Ἀλανίᾳ παράκεινται), which provide it with all of its 'livelihood and plenty' (ἡ πᾶσα ζωὴ καὶ ἀφθονία). However, it should be noted that the *DAI* refers to the regions in question as 'adjacent' to, rather than identical with, Alania, and that it envisages a situation where 'the Alan [ruler]' (ὁ Ἀλανός) could cause 'damage and dearth' by raiding, which would seem to imply that 'the Alan' himself did not habitually collect tribute from the regions in question.[301] The following section will draw on recent investigation of the long-term evolution of the historic agriculture of the Kislovodsk Basin to re-evaluate the relationship between local elites and wider patterns of tribute collection before, during, and after the 'Khazar' period.

Archaeologists have been aware for many years of the existence of agricultural terraces in areas of the Kislovodsk basin that do not appear to have been used for crop cultivation for many centuries. More recently, the use of aerial photography and GIS tools of analysis has enabled a significant expansion in the understanding of the extent and nature of the prehistoric and early medieval agricultural systems of the Kislovodsk basin.[302] Korobov and Borisov's work on the agriculture of the Kislovodsk Basin has revealed the evolution of agriculture over two millennia. They have distinguished between three characteristic field types: type-1 terraces, which consist of a small number of very sharply stepped platforms, up to 7–9 m in height and 20–30 m wide; type-2 terraces, which are formed as cascades of long narrow strips on the slopes of hills and promontories; and small square plots with boundary walls, which occupy the surface of a number

[300] Arzhantseva, 'Kamennye kreposti', pp. 81, fig. 4, 82, 84; id. 'The Alans: Neighbours of the Khazars in the Caucasus', in Golden *et al.* (eds.), *The World of the Khazars*, p. 65; V.B. Kovalevskaia 'Tsentral'noe Predkavkaz'e', in S.A. Pletneva (ed.), *Stepi Evrazii v epokhu srednevekov'ia* (Moscow, 1981), pp. 84–5.
[301] P.K. Kokovtsov, *Evreisko-khazarskaia perepiska v X veke* (Leningrad, 1932), pp. 100–2; *DAI*, ch. 10, lines 5–8.
[302] Afanas'ev, Korobov and Savenko, *Drevnosti*, pp. 69–88

of the promontories and plateaux of the basin (cf. Fig. 3.5).[303] Investigation of soil samples, of the typology of pottery finds and of the radio-carbon dating of animal bones buried in these fields have enabled Korobov and Borisov to suggest the following dating.[304] They date the type-1 terraces that they have investigated on the left bank of the Kabardinka River and on the left bank of the Kich-Malka River to the 'Koban' period, between around 1200 and 600 BCE.[305] They date type-2 terraces, such as those that they have investigated on either side of the Perepryzhka River to the second to fifth centuries CE, although they also suggest some of these field patterns could correspond to the later period of the functioning of the Rim-Gora fortress in the tenth century. By analogy with the field-systems of north-western Europe, they term these cascades of long narrow steps 'strip-lynchets'. Finally they date the third type of system that is based on small plots with boundary walls, examples of which we have already referred to in connection with the Zubchikhinskie fortifications, to the fifth to eighth centuries CE. Again, by analogy with the field systems of north-western Europe, they term these plots 'Celtic fields'.[306]

The dating of the large terraces to the Koban era and the rectangular fields with boundary walls is more secure than the dating of the cascades of narrow terraces due to the importance of ceramic scatters in the buried soil as dating material, and the relative paucity of such scatters in the latter type of field. Attempts to date ancient fields by radiocarbon dating of soil samples were found unsatisfactory since natural processes of soil formation led to results that made the anthropogenic processes appear to have occurred much earlier than was probably actually the case.[307] The ceramic scatters found in particular on the surface and in the buried soils beneath the

[303] D.S. Korobov and A.V. Borisov, 'O zemledelii Alan Kislovodskoi kotloviny v I tys. n. e.' *RA* (2012), 3, pp. 51–2, fig. 1; A.V. Borisov and D.S. Korobov, 'Terrasnoe zemledelie v Kislovodskoi kotlovine', *RA* (2009), 3, p. 31.
[304] Borisov and Korobov, 'Terassnoe zemledelie', pp. 31–2.
[305] And *not* to the much earlier 'Maikop' period (4th–2nd mil. BCE), a dating reached through radiocarbon dating of soil samples: M.I. Skripnikova, 'Izuchenie drevnego zemledeliia v gorakh Kavkaza', in *Drevnii Kavkaz: retrospektsiia kul'tur. XXIV Krupnovskie chteniia* (Moscow, 2004), pp. 181–4.
[306] Korobov and Borisov, 'O zemledelii', pp. 50–62.
[307] Borisov and Korobov, 'Terrasnoe zemledelie', pp. 22–34; A.V. Borisov *et al*., 'Ancient Agricultural Terraces in the Kislovodsk Depression: History and Modern State of the Soils', *Eurasian Soil Science*, 45 (2012), pp. 561–77.

large terraces and above and beneath the rectangular fields are evidence of manuring practice.[308] Especially on light, upland soils, significant intervention would have been required to maintain sufficient productivity for crop farming. Since archaeologists first realised off-site ceramic scatters may provide evidence of manuring activity (rather than simply objects lost during travel), cases have been documented from Shapwick in Somerset to the Jazira in Upper Mesopotamia of ancient and medieval farmers manuring in shards of pottery, brought to the fields along with domestic waste from settlements.[309]

Dokuchaev's concepts of soil as an organic matrix, formed by climate, parent material, organisms, topography and time, and his interest in the relationship between horizontal and vertical zonality are of direct relevance to understanding the distributions of these ceramic scatters.[310] The Kislovodsk Basin is located on the edge of the rich black earth zone of the North Caucasian and South Russian steppes, and of much lighter soils in the mountains of the Caucasus, but its complicated topography makes it a patchwork of different microclimates and soils. Deep river valleys cut through the cuesta formation, so the exposed lighter brown soils of the plateaux are located directly above sheltered narrow tree-covered river banks below. Meanwhile many of the less precipitous slopes of the cuesta formation are covered in soils whose productivity by the early middle ages had been dramatically constrained by much earlier human activities.

[308] Processes of soil formation cause the ceramic shards to be pushed up to higher levels over time, even while the soil into which they were original dug is buried.
[309] T.J. Wilkinson, 'The Definition of Ancient Manured Zones by Means of Extensive Sherd-Sampling Techniques', *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 9 (1982), pp. 323–33; id., 'Soil Development and Early Land Use in the Jazira region, Upper Mesopotamia', *World Archaeology*, 22:1 (1990), pp. 87–103; J.L. Bintliff and A.M. Snodgrass, 'Off-Site Pottery Distributions: A Regional and Interregional Perspective', *Current Anthropology*, 29 (1988), pp. 506–13; P. Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD. British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 209; C. Taylor, *Fields in the English Landscape* (London, 1975), p.30. It has been argued that in later medieval England, attitudes to manure differed sharply between peasants and aristocrats, with important consequences for different strategies of production on land controlled by different social groups: R. Jones, 'Manure and the Medieval Social Order', in M.J. Allen, N. Sharples and T. O'Connor (eds.), *Land and People: Papers in Honour of John Evans* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 215–25.
[310] Fowler, *Farming,* pp. 54–7: see §3.2 above.

Investigation of the buried soil of the left-bank Kabardinka (type-1) terraces has revealed an early Iron Age cautionary ecological tale. The large quantities of buried fertile soil in the terraces of this type indicate that the process of constructing the terraces had led to the transfer of such soil from the sections at the watershed down onto the terraces. A few years several years of exceptionally heavy rainfall could have led to the catastrophic erosion of the ground at the higher levels of the terraces, and the stripping of the fertile soil from the surface of the terraces. This would have been buried at the lower levels beneath the colluvial sediments, making the terraces unusable.[311] The incident is a good illustration of what Peter Thonemann, following Engels, has termed the 'dialectics of nature'.[312] Ancient human responses to natural patterns of led to the creation of a labour-intensive system of managed erosion. However, the system created the potential for catastrophic erosion, bequeathing to future generations a landscape visibly shaped by the traces of earlier agricultural activity, but whose soils would no longer sustain anything more than scrub for centuries.[313] Both parts of the legacy will have shaped the decisions of subsequent farmers.

Climate change has been used as an explanation for the proliferation of the (type-3) 'Celtic fields' associated with the early medieval fortified sites at higher altitudes (cf. Fig.3.6). A palaeoclimatic model for the Kislovodsk Basin in the second half of the first millennium has worked on an assumption that the temperature of the Atlantic Ocean was 0.8°C above present (a 'disturbed climate'), producing the result that the area of the basin above 1080 m altitude would have had a similar climate to that below 1020 m under current conditions. An 'optimal' early medieval

[311] Borisov *et al*., 'Ancient Agricultural Terraces', pp. 571–6, figs. 7, 8.
[312] Cf. two works on rivers: P. Thonemann, *The Maeander Valley: A Historical Geography from Antiquity to Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 295–338; also see: R. White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York, 1995), p. 12 on rivers as, 'products of their own past history'.
[313] Korobov and Borisov, *Drevnee i srednevekovoe zemledelie*, pp. 191–200; cf. accelerated soil erosion resulting from ancient terracing in New Mexico: J.A. Sandor, P.L. Gersper and J.W. Hawley, 'Prehistoric Agricultural Terraces and Soils in the Mimbres Area, New Mexico', *World Archaeology*, 22.1 (1990), pp. 77–83.

climatic zone has been reconstructed for the area between 900 m and 1500 m.[314] According to this model, climatic conditions were better suited to the growing of crops on the surfaces divided up into rectangular plots by the early medieval Alan farmers in that period than in subsequent periods.

The puzzling feature of the model, however, is the initial assumption. Palinological data from the Taman' peninsula has been cited, which has been used to infer aridisation between around 450 and 700 CE, and mild humidisation between 700 and 1000 CE; but the extrapolation from this data to assessments of the global climate is risky. Moreover, there is no data for the past 1000 years, so comparisons with current, post-industrial levels of climate are impossible.[315] Many climate scientists now argue for caution with the use of the concept of the 'medieval warm period' in general, but even evidence that suggests the warmest levels of northern hemispheric temperatures were between ca. 950–1100 CE still put them at between 0.1–0.2°C *below* the 1961–90 mean, and well below post–1980 temperatures.[316] A model based on Atlantic Sea temperatures at 0.8°C *above* current levels seems unwarranted.

The dating of the cascades of (type-2) narrow terraces or 'strip lynchets' has proved more complicated than that of the other fields in the region. Traces of these types of fields are concentrated in an area in the north west of the Kislovodsk Basin where Koban era farming was evidently shorter lived than in other areas of the region. This made it possible for the soil in this area to avoid the dramatic erosion processes that occurred elsewhere. Unfortunately, some of

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[314] Afanas'ev, Savenko and Korobov, *Drevnosti,* pp. 62–88; Afanas'ev and Korobov, 'Ash-Tigors' Granaries', pp. 675–84; D. Korobov, 'GIS as a Tool for Investigation of Early Medieval Climatic Changes in the Kislovodsk Basin (Southern Russia)', in A. Posluschny, K. Lambers and I. Herzog (eds.), *Layers of Perception – CAA 2007* (Bonn, 2008), pp. 399–404.

[315] N.S. Bolikhovskaia *et al.*, 'Izmeneniia landshaftno-klimaticheskikh uslovii Tamanskogo poluostrova na protiazhenii poslednikh 6000 let', *PIFK* (2012), pp. 257–71; Afanas'ev, Savenko and Korobov, *Drevnosti*, p. 81.

[316] E. Jansen and J. Overpeck *et al.*, 'Palaeoclimate', in S. Solomon (eds.), *Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, 2007), chapter 6.6.1, accessed at https://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg1/en/ch6s6-6.html#6-6-1 on 19 August 2016; P.D. Jones and M.E. Mann, 'Climate Over Past Millennia', *Review of Geophysics*, 42:2 (2004), accessed at **DOI:** 10.1029/2003RG000143 on 19 August 2016.

these terraces were investigated before Borisov and Korobov had fully developed their methodology, so while soil profiles have been found, ceramic scatters were not investigated, and dating material was correspondingly lost. Given the location of many of these field patterns close to the significant tenth to twelfth century fortification and settlement of Rim-Gora, a reasonable working assumption was to connect the strip lynchets with the latter. [317] Strip lynchets have traditionally been associated with the use of heavy ploughs. The process of turning the plough teams around lies behind their characteristic S-bends.[318] Since these ploughs, none of which have yet been found in the Kislovodsk Basin, have previously assumed to have been first brought into use in the high middle ages, the connection of these field systems with Rim-Gora seemed all the more plausible.[319] However, absence of evidence for ploughs is not evidence of absence, as Tom Williamson has argued: 'Ploughs have left little trace in the archaeological record, as they were made of materials which were either easily recycled, or perishable'.[320]

An early date for some of the type-2 'strip lynchet' fields, predating the 'Celtic fields' is possible. The second- to fourth-century settlements the barrow-covered catacomb burials are also concentrated in this region. There is no reason why such fields, or the tools used to make them, need to be seen as the end of a linear process of evolution: again, as Williamson puts it, 'the neat division often posited between ard and heavy mouldboard plough actually simplifies a more gradual and complex pattern of development'.[321] In any case, an implication of this would be that this form of intensive ploughing technology was later abandoned in the region in the different

[317] Korobov and Borisov, *Drevnee i srednevekovoe zemledelie*, pp. 198–205.
[318] Fowler, *Farming*, pp. 182–198; P.J. Fowler and J.G. Evans, 'Plough-marks, Lynchets and Early Fields', *Antiquity*, 41 (1967), pp. 289–301.
[319] A plough knife (0.45 m long, blade up to 3.5 cm) and ploughshare were found at the fortress of Adiiukh near Nal'chik in Kabardino-Balkariia, east of the Kislovodsk Basin, in 1955. By analogy with finds from sites in the Don region, it was dated to the 10th–11th centuries: B.A. Kaloev, *Zemledelie narodov Severnogo Kavkaza* (Moscow, 1981), pp. 14–15.
[320] T. Williamson, *Environment, Society and Landscape in Early Medieval England: Time and Topography* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 17.
[321] Korobov and Borisov, *Drevnee i srednevekovoe zemledelie*, pp. 39–40, 201–5; Williamson, *Environment, Society and Landscape*, p. 18; for an example of Roman-era 'strip lynchets' along Hadrian's wall, abandoned when the garrison withdrew: J. Crow, *English Heritage Book of Housesteads* (London, 1995), pp. 73–5, 98–9; Fowler, *Farming*, p. 154.

social conditions of the fifth to eighth centuries. It is possible that such a technology was then re-adopted in the tenth to twelfth centuries. Absence of ceramic dating evidence does not conclusively exclude the possibility of tenth to twelfth-century cultivation: the absence of ceramic scatters may simply indicate a different practice used for maintaining soil fertility, which did not involve the use of large quantities of ceramic-rich domestic waste. However, it would be reassuring to have some positive evidence for the high medieval use of the 'strip lynchets', and some possible criteria for distinguishing within the 'type-2 terraces' between those characteristic of the early Alan and high medieval Alan farmers.

In any case, when looking at such terraced landscapes, it is, 'essential to appreciate that we are not usually dealing with once-for-all improvements'.[322] The considerations just discussed indicate the problems with the technical determinism that characterised Lynn White's thesis on the role of the heavy plough in the genesis of feudalism.[323] As Horden and Purcell emphasise, plough technology must be seen 'as a relatively small cog in a much greater machine', involving many different, microregionally adapted productive choices.[324] However, while different productive strategies should not be reduced to the diffusion or alteration of a single piece of technology, the ensemble of such choices may well demand very different levels of cooperation and coordination, with significant implications for the power relations within a given society.[325] The agricultural pattern of the fifth to eighth centuries in the Kislovodsk Basin appears to have suited a society that placed particular emphasis on production for individual household or groups of household units, as opposed to maximising production for larger settlements. In a landscape characterised

[322] Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, p. 235.
[323] White, *Medieval Technology*, p. 56; Sawyer and Hilton, 'Technical Determnism', pp. 90–100; cf. §3.4 above.
[324] In downscaling the importance of the plough, Horden and Purcell draw on Marshall Sahlins's insight that, 'For the greater part of human history, labor has been more significant than tools, the intelligent efforts of the producer more significant than his simple equipment': Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, pp. 231–4: see M. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 2nd edn (London, 1974), p. 81.
[325] In other words, relations of production are shaped by the forces of production: R. Faith, 'Forces and Relations of Production in Early Medieval England', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 9:1 (2009), pp. 23–41.

by visible traces of other, older, more intensive forms of agricultural production, this might even be seen as a choice.[326]

It is tempting to see in this a kind of 'escape agriculture', as found in other mountain landscapes. James Scott has argued that many of the features of the societies of upland Southeast Asia were formed by flight from lowland state-building projects.[327] Scott presents the societies he is looking at as having undergone a process of radical simplification of social hierarchies that he terms 'self-barbarianisation', precisely in order to render them 'illegible' to powerful neighbours, seeking to identify, make use of and create indigenous hierarchies for the purposes of political control and economic exploitation.[328] In many ways, the Kislovodsk Basin's high density of fortifications, the evidence for significant central places and for important connections between local elites and imperial agents suggest a society that was in some ways all too open to the violent effects of competing imperial interests.[329] However, the evidence for systems of production that enabled individual households or small groups of households to maintain their independence in this context may indicate resilient strategies in a tough neighbourhood. This resilience most likely extended to the strategies of seed selection and sharing which Nikolai Vavilov noticed was so characteristic of agriculturalists in mountain regions. [330]

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[326] To reverse the Lynn White thesis, this almost looks like a decision to turn *away* from a system of land-distribution based on 'the ability of a power-engine to till the earth' *towards* one based on the needs of individual household units: cf. White, *Medieval Technology*, p. 56.

[327] Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 187–207.

[328] Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 207–19. On Roman attempts to create clients in the 'tribal zone': D.J. Mattingly, 'War and Peace in Roman North Africa. Observations and Models of State-Tribe Interaction' in Ferguson and Whitehead (eds.), *War in the Tribal Zone. Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare* (Santa Fe, 2000), pp. 31–60.

[329] Comparative perspectives: R.B. Ferguson, N.L. Whitehead, 'The Violent Edge of Empires', in Ferguson and Whitehead (eds.), *War in the Tribal Zone*, pp. 1–30.

[330] Gary Nabhan, following in the footsteps of Vavilov describes following seeds across the river Panj between Tajikistan and Afghanistan: 'After our vehicle rose from the floodplain and passed by terrace after terrace of irrigated orchards and grain and legume crops, we came upon a sprawling marketplace of makeshift stands just outside an old fortress. There we met multilingual traders of culinary herbs and crop seeds who personally transported the products of Pamiri farmers to others at the same elevations as far south as the Khyber Pass hundreds of kilometres away. At first, it was mind-boggling to me that the elderly trader in the turban before me in a small hut on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border could orally order vegetable seeds or spices from a traveller headed south toward Kabul, who would then relay that order in a

The resilience of such groups would also have depended on the relationship between crop production and pastoralism. The distinction between arable and pastoral should not be drawn too sharply: the same fields could be used for crop cultivation and for pasture in different parts of the year.[331] Finds of animal bones at settlements and in burials datable to the fifth to eighth centuries, and analysis of the bones and teeth of the humans buried indicate the Alans who farmed their rectangular 'Celtic fields' enjoyed a mixed diet, albeit one with a much higher cereal content than that of the people buried at Klin-Yar in the earlier centuries of the first millennium.[332] Finds of bones indicate a preponderance of sheep and goats, with a smaller percentage of cattle and horses, and, in general, a smaller percentage still of pigs. Enclosures for livestock dating to the early middle ages (based on analysis of urease in buried soil, and on ceramic finds) have been mapped at altitudes of 1500–2500 m above sea level, distributed in southern areas beyond the zone of fortified settlements and associated field systems in the Kislovodsk Basin. The same livestock that were pastured in the subalpine zone during the summer were perhaps brought back to winter pasture on the settlements, and on the wooded slopes of the river valleys directly below the settlements.[333]

Even if we avoid the trap of conceiving 'Celtic' fields, 'monopolistically as a type of arable field, distracting attention from the equally important pastoral side of the landscape and economy', though, there are significant implications that follow from the chronology of landscape change in the first millennium proposed by Korobov and Borisov.[334] The creation of a landscape of enclosed

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dialect of Farsi to others farther to the south, who would then obtain the seeds of spices from a Bengali trader in India. Informal access to such plant diversity – as we were soon to see – offered peasants in the Pamir highlands a kind of resilience in the face of change that no formal government seed introduction program could ever surpass': Nabhan, *Where Our Food Comes From*, pp. 53–4. For the wide range of stenoendemic, subendemic and relict species of flora in this region: T.S. Rybalkina, 'Ekologo-tsenoticheskii analiz flory peredovykh melovykh khrebtov tsentral'noi chasti Severnogo Kavkaza', *Vestnik Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo oblastnogo universiteta. Seriia: Estestvennye nauki*, 2 (2009), pp. 72–6; Korobov and Borisov, *Drevnee i srednevekovoe zemledelie*, p. 15, table 1.

[331] Fowler, *Farming*, p. 131.

[332] Higham *et al.*, 'Radiocarbon dating', pp. 653–70.

[333] D.S. Korobov, 'Sistema rasseleniia alan Tsentral'nogo Predkavkaz'ia v I tys. n.e. (landshaftnaia arkheologiia Kislovodskoi kotloviny' (IA RAN, Moscow, Dissertation – Doctor of Science, 2014), pp. 346–63.

[334] Fowler, *Farming*, p. 129.

plots organised around stone fortifications may have reflected the attempt of small households to maintain their independence, rather than the outcome of central planning. Small groups of people staked their claims across this landscape to a degree of independence and stability through their construction and maintenance of their individual plots and stone towers, however dependent they were ultimately on cooperation with other inhabitants of the Kislovodsk Basin for the purposes of trade, or military endeavours, or, perhaps, livestock rearing. Meanwhile, the landscapes of the strip lynchets appear to indicate collective investments of labour. Elite figures probably stood better placed to benefit from such concentrated investments of collective labour than from the scattered individual 'Celtic' plots.

The evidence for the pastoral economy is fragmentary and relies upon a range of sites from beyond the confines of the Kislovodsk Basin, but there are a series of possible indicators of larger scale cattle-rearing in the early centuries of the first millennium, and then again in the early second millennium, compared to the fifth to eighth centuries.[335] When combined with the evidence for a more intensive form of cereal production during these periods, and a sharper distinction between dense areas of habitation and larger areas of very little evident habitation during this period, one picture that might emerge is one of a sharper division of labour, a sharper dichotomy between the pastoral and arable sectors, compared to the small-scale mixed farming of the early medieval Alans. It seems possible that in comparison to the mixed, low-range agricultural cycle of the fifth to eighth-centuries, these early and late periods were characterised by a greater spatial division, between areas of relatively intensive crop growing, certainly in the region of the preserved strip lynchets, but possibly also in areas now covered by modern infrastructure and plough marks, and more distant alpine pastures on the Bermamyt plateau.

[335] Higham *et al.*, 'Radiocarbon dating', pp. 653–70; Ia.B. Berezin and A.K. Shvyreva, 'Fauna poseleniia Energetik II-IV vv. na Piatigor'ia (po dannym raskopok 2001 goda), *Materialy po izucheniia istoriko-kul'turnogo naslediia Severnogo Kavkaza*, 7, (2007), pp. 208–17; Korobov, 'Sistema rasseleniia', pp. 346–63.

There is no particular reason to assume this spatial division of labour should be understood in ethnic terms, with settled farmers on the one side and nomadic pastoralists on the other. Those buried at Klin-Yar in the early centuries of the first millennium did not mark their ethnicity as distinct from, for instance, those buried in the barrow burials that have been associated with the early strip lynchets.[336] Analogous field patterns may have once existed in the region of Klin-Yar, but this lies within the modern cultivated zone, and so any traces of its ancient fields are now long lost. Nonetheless, if Korobov and Borisov are right in seeing analogies between the agricultural economy of the second to fourth and tenth to twelfth centuries, and if the extrapolation of the potential place of pastoralism within that economy presented here has any basis, it is interesting to compare how people represented themselves in the two periods. As we have seen, while in the early period, dominant references were to the horse-riding Iranian nomads of the North Caucasian steppe, in the later period, a whole range of material culture pointed to connections with the settled peoples of the Byzantine world. This self-representation was about politics as much as origins or the actual role of pastoral production in the economy of the inhabitants of the Kislovodsk Basin.

The issue of self-representation arises when we consider the monumentality of terraced landscapes. Part of the achievement of figures such as O.G.S. Crawford and W.G. Hoskins was to enable new ways of seeing, revealing how rural landscapes were no less the consequence of conscious human planning, often in the very distant past, than the famous cityscapes of the ancient world. The archaeologists working in the Kislovodsk Basin stand in that tradition. Nonetheless, for all their avoidance of crude environmental determinism, there is a tendency towards functionalism in some of the explanations given for the adoption of different farming techniques. The decision to create and maintain strip lynchets was conditioned by the need to grow enough food to eat, and beyond that to amass enough surplus to obtain other essentials, to

[336] Korobov, Malashev and Faßbinder, 'Predvaritel'nye rezul'taty', pp. 120– 5; Berezina, Frizen and Korobov, 'Antropologicheskie materialy', pp. 170–8.

keep up with the neighbours or to meet obligations to the powerful; but it was also a decision with an aesthetic consequence, shaping how the landscape looked.[337] The farmers who worked to maintain the shape of their strip lynchets through the way they led their plough teams would have been well aware of this. Just as it has been argued that styles of construction techniques, of dress or of burial rite contributed to define a community, and individuals, and subgroups, within it, so would the physical contours of the agrarian landscape.

3.7 Intensification and abatement

All of which leads back, once again, to the question of what was happening in the period between the mid-eighth and tenth centuries CE. The chronology presented in this chapter, drawing on the work of Dmitrii Korobov and Aleksandr Borisov, and their colleagues and predecessors, has enabled us to chart processes of intensification and abatement in the exploitation of nature and human labour. It has been seen that there are different types of intensification and abatement, depending on techniques, specific microregions and the relationship between the pastoral and agrarian economies.

The proliferation of 'Celtic fields' across the Kislovodsk Basin in the early middle ages was accompanied by abatement for some parts of the landscape which, if Korobov and Borisov are correct, had previously been subjected to heavy ploughs, and which were now allowed to lie fallow while farmers used their scratch ploughs on lighter, higher soils. The human energy required to raise crops on these lighter soils would have been less than the combined human and animal energy required to raise crops on the heavier soils scored with strip lynchets, and so would have been more within the means of a smaller social group. This landscape of small stone

[337] T. O'Connor and J.G. Evans, *Environmental Archaeology. Principles and Methods,* 2nd edn, (Stroud, 2005), pp. 239–45. On the association between cult sites and terraces in Central American contexts: G.M. Feinamn and L.M. Nicholas, 'Intensive Survey of Hilltop Terrace Sites in Oaxaca, Mexico', *Antiquity*, 74:283 (2000), pp. 21–2.

fortifications and 'escape agriculture' offered resistance to further intensification over about three centuries. Then, in the eighth century, at around the time destruction layers can be seen at excavated sites such as Ukazatel' and Gornoe Ekho, and the cemeteries at Klin-Yar and Mokraia Balka fell out of use, the ceramic scatters on the 'Celtic fields' stopped.

The risk of circularity in the dating has already been raised. The dating of the ceramic rests to an important degree on sequences from the Mokraia Balka cemetery.[338] If some of the burials at this site were to be given a later date, then there would be reason for reconsidering the ceramic dates. This is all the more so given the fact that so few of the early medieval settlements in the region have yet been excavated: it might be hoped that future excavations might yield some radiocarbon dates as well as improving our understanding of the ceramic sequences. Nonetheless, while it is possible that occupation of the stone fortresses and the farming of the 'Celtic fields' continued for longer than proposed by Korobov, the evidence does seem to point to a break in occupation before the tenth century.

The next chapter will suggest argue that this shift ought to be seen in connection with wider regional developments. It will be argued that the transformations in Alan society during this period cannot be explained in the traditional way in terms of the upheavals caused by the 'Arab-Khazar' wars, for reasons discussed in the previous chapter, but instead should be understood in terms of the development of the intra-regional economy encompassing both the Black Sea and the Caspian between the mid-eighth and tenth centuries. As has been seen already, this explanation does not deny the violent nature of the processes involved, but it suggests the location of that violence is not where the traditional narratives have placed it.

Nonetheless, the logic of the arguments presented in this chapter dictate that a role should be acknowledged for factors endogenous to the ecology of the Kislovodsk Basin. Vavilov's work on small-scale mountain crop farming suggests ways in which the farmers of the early medieval

[338] See §3.4 above.

'Celtic fields' may have been able to maintain a degree of resilience, through their careful selection and sharing of seeds, and by taking advantage of the range of survival strategies offered by the kind of mixed agrarian and pastoral economy reconstructed above. The early medieval Alan farmers had not stored up a potential ecological catastrophe for themselves in the way that the ancient Koban farmers had. Still, by the tenth century, we appear to see signs of a new concentration of settlement, and intensification of agricultural production around elite sites.

The next two chapters will consider other factors that may have shaped how this transformation of Alan landscape and society occurred: first, by looking at how networks were constructed to facilitate the voluntary or forced movement of people and goods to and from different metropolitan regions, and then, by looking at how the infrastructural power of the Alan elite was beginning to develop over the course of the tenth century.[339] This chapter has deliberately emphasised the agency of non-elite actors in shaping the landscape of the Kislovodsk Basin. The model of decentralised appropriation of suitable farming areas proposed by Dmitrii Korobov to explain the settlement pattern of the early medieval period has been found more convincing than the creation of a centralised system of defence as argued for by Irina Arzhantseva. The argument presented here has gone a step further to suggest that individual groups of farmers consciously chose to exploit the resources of the Kislovodsk Basin in this way in order to maintain their independence from emergent elites. Climate and soil may have created the conditions of possibility, but it was still the decision of individual groups of farmers across the region to choose this strategy for feeding themselves, rather than any other, and to build stone walls to symbolise (and if necessary, defend) their independence.

By the same token, if there had appeared to be a relatively smooth transition from this settlement pattern to that characterised by large settlements such as Rim-Gora and the

[339] The concept of 'infrastructural power' is taken from M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power,* I: *A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 26.

associated strip lynchet field systems, then it would have made sense to suggest that the shift may have occurred in part because some ambitious farmers started experimenting with heavy plough technologies in the heavier soil to the north. On this scenario, those who had the good fortune to come from families that had the means, resolve or ingenuity to move early and invent or acquire this technology would have begun to differentiate themselves from others whose families had been unable, or chosen not to take that route. Something like this has been proposed as part of the explanation for the transformation of some English farming communities in around the same time.[340]

However, the evidence for rupture in the landscape archaeology of the Kislovodsk basin between the eighth and tenth centuries makes it harder to propose such a model in this case. Many of the possible conditions existed for such an evolution: the emergence of an increasingly wealthy elite at sites such as Klin-Yar, changing climatic conditions (perhaps), the presence within the landscape of the traces of earlier systems of agriculture which might have suggested alternatives to the system practiced in the early medieval period. However, the break in the archaeological record suggests that the elite that controlled sites at Rim-Gora and Ulludorbunla had emerged through quite a different process. It will be this that the following two chapters will attempt to demonstrate.

[340] Williamson, *Environment, Society and Landscape*, p. 243, where he 'championed the importance of the productive base rather than the extractive superstructure'; cf. Faith, 'Forces and Relations of Production, pp. 23–41, where she shifted her emphasis somewhat from the 'top-down' imposition of lordship stressed in: id., *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London, 1997).

CHAPTER 4

MOSHCHEVAIA BALKA AND THE WIDER WORLD

4.1 Keeping-while-giving

At some point in the later eighth or ninth centuries, a girl who had lived high in the mountains in the North West Caucasus, died at the early age of around 12 to 14, and was buried in a rock grave at the Moshchevaia Balka cemetery.[341] A naturally formed niche in the rock face at the back of the terrace was used for her burial chamber. Before her body was placed inside, the sides of the niche were smoothed and widened. The orientation of the burial chamber followed the line of the rock face (WSW–ENE), and the dimensions were 1.30 x 0.55 x 0.40 m.[342] The chamber was evidently sealed with large stones, placed over the entrance, and then covered with plaster made from clay and straw, and whitened with chalk, although this construction was almost entirely ruined by the time it was investigated in the late 1960s.

The girl was laid to rest on grass bedding, with a pillow beneath her head.[343] She was placed on her right side, with her head nearest the entrance, and her knees slightly bent. Her headdress consisted of a thin headband made from a strip of imported woollen tapestry patterned with parallel rows of small birds, and a very thin plait of hair. Seven brass bracteates (one with traces

[341] Burial 2, section B of the cemetery. Discovered by the director of the local school in Kurdzhinovo, E.A. Milovanov in 1968. Now on permanent exhibition in the Hermitage: Inv. 6671-6694: A.A. Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka: neobychnyi arkheologicheskii pamiatnik na Severokavkazskom shelkovom puti* (St. Petersburg, 2012), pp. 72–7; id., *Die Gräber der Moščevaja Balka: frühmittelalterliche Funde an der nordkaukasischen Seidenstrasse*, German tr. I.M. Smoljanski and U. Rosenschon (Munich, 1996), pp. 139–40, No. I/2.

[342] For comparison, Evgenii Savchenko gives the following range of dimensions at Moshchevaia Balka: for adult male burials, lengths 1.25m-2.60m, widths 0.7-1.21m; for adult female burials, lengths 1.10–2.05 m, widths 0.40–0.85 m; for child burials, lengths 1.05–1.30 m, widths 0.40–0.60m: Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', p. 105.

[343] Cf. the preserved linen pillow, 22x54 cm, filled with straw, buried with an adult woman in Burial 1, section B: Inv. 6708: Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 39; id., *Die Gräber,* pp. 139, 156, No. I/1, II/326.

of gilding) were sown onto the headband and into her plaited hair: these appear to be very crude imitations of Byzantine solidi.[344] The girl wore the same kind of dress as the adult women of her society: a linen tunic dress with strips of silk sown into it, and a pocket over her chest with straps for amulets, beads and toiletries.[345] A bear's claw and a silk amulet bag were suspended from the left strap. Inside the silk bag were broken hazelnut twigs and peppercorns.[346] Two decorated chamois horns were suspended from other straps, along with a string of jet, glass and glass paste beads and cowrie shells.[347] Attached to her chest were a selection of brass toiletries, and a small mirror in a felt bag. She also appears to have worn a bracelet made of organic material, and on her ears she wore two tripartite earrings, made from silver and brass beads. Alongside her body were deposited a small wooden box containing pieces of bark, the handle of an adze, a wooden knife, and a fragment of textile. [348] A black glazed pitcher which had been broken and repaired at some point before deposition was placed by the girl's head.[349]

This burial of a teenage girl in a mountain valley of the North Caucasus provides the point of departure for an investigation of the relationship between adornment and money, local rituals and long-distance systems of exchange. This enables us to connect the small worlds of the North-West Caucasus, discussed in chapter three, with the imperial systems from whose centres we approach the North Caucasus in chapters two and five. The imitation coins incorporated into the girl's headdress are the most obvious examples of decorative objects that derive in some way from tokens of exchange, but beads and textiles also appear to have functioned as both 'adornment to the person' and as forms of money.[350] Within the social system of the burial

[344] Inv. 6683-8: Ierusalimskaia, *Die Gräber*, p. 200, No. V/14-17; id., *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 297–300; but cf. H. Roth, [Review of *Die Gräber*], *BZ*, 97 (1999), p. 527.
[345] Inv. 6697: Ierusalimskaia, *Die Gräber*, p.149, No. II/102.
[346] Not bilberries, as reported by Ierusalimskaia (Communication by Z. Dode).
[347] Inv. 6672: Iersualimskaia, *Die Gräber*, p. 298, No. V/109, III/155.
[348] Inv. 6675, 6677-9, 6682, 6691-4: Ierusalimskaia, *Die Gräber*, pp. 161, 199, 204–5, No. III/3, V/1, 71-4, 83, 85, 88.
[349] Remains in the school museum in Kurdzhinovo: Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 77.
[350] 'Adornment to the person': E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* [1954] (London, 1970), p. 241.

communities, and within their interactions with the wider world, these objects, and their use, had both abstract properties (as generic stores of value, media of exchange and units of account), and concrete properties (as means for the expression of specific social identity and specific social relationships). As David Graeber has argued, the interplay between abstract and concrete forms of value expresses relationships between the visible and invisible sources of social power.[351]

In this connection, the specific burial contexts of our materials are significant. Since the post-processual turn in archaeology, it has been commonplace to acknowledge the potential gap between the ideological vision of the structure of a society presented in its burial rituals and the more open-ended nature of normal social practice.[352] Nonetheless, anthropological work on mortuary practices that has looked at how 'representations of death and the ancestors are *continuous* with everyday life' indicates a need to go beyond looking at burial rites in terms of ideology.[353] The continuity of representations of death with everyday life is brought into stark relief by the role of secondary burial rites, touched upon in the previous chapter.

The materials buried in the mountains of the North West Caucasus reflect personal decisions about deceased individuals; but at the same time, they reflect the interactions of the social systems of the agrarian empires of the Near East, the nomadic confederations of the steppe region and the highland societies of the North Caucasus. In their control over the production, distribution and display of coins and textiles, imperial elites in Constantinople and Baghdad expressed concrete and specific ideas about the social ordering of the world, and simultaneously treated the same materials as forms of abstract wealth, whose circulation was to be regulated for

[351] D. Graeber, 'Beads and Money: Notes toward a Theory of Wealth and Power', *American Ethnologist,* 23:1 (1996), pp. 4–24.
[352] F. Ekengren, 'Contextualising Grave Goods: Theoretical Perspectives and Implications', in L.N. Stutz and S. Tarlow (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 174–6; E.-J. Pader, *Symbolism, Social Relations and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains* (Oxford, 1982).
[353] D. Graeber, 'Dancing with Corpses Reconsidered: An Interpretation of *Famidhana* (in Arivonimamo, Madagascar)', *American Ethnologist,* 22:2 (1995), p. 259; Graeber is responding to the classic study by Maurice Bloch, which informs Pader's approach to Anglo-Saxon archaeology: M. Bloch, *Placing the Dead: Tombs, Ancestral Villages, and Kinship Organization in Madagascar* (London, 1971).

the sake of further accumulation.[354] A parallel dynamic existed within the political system of the Khazar Qaghanate, reflected for example in its experiment with a 'Moses' coinage in 837/8, but also, as argued below, in its control of the circulation and production of textiles.[355] Substantive and formal economic logics coexist as contradictions within the same social systems: the codes that governed the wearing of silk or the circulation of currency in Byzantium, the Caliphate and the Qaghanate determined the processes of its production and acquisition, but the processes of production and acquisition influenced the structures of power reflected in dress codes and rituals of exchange.

Imperial elites, from Byzantium through the 'Abbāsid caliphate to Tang China, came to different solutions for the social regulation of the production, circulation and display of movable wealth within their core regions, but a competitive drive to acquire resources and contacts from an extended hinterland created its own contradictions. As the anthropologist Annette Weiner writes in the context of the use of cloth in Oceanian burial rituals, 'How to keep-while-giving is as difficult a societal problem as how death can be transcended or how rank can be preserved.'[356] The problem was formulated in Byzantine handbooks on statecraft such as *De administrando imperio*, whose sixth chapter gives details of the various commodities (including textiles) that can be used by the Chersonites to pay Pechenegs for their services, while its thirteenth chapter

[354] On the ideological importance attributed in Byzantium to quite specific ways in which the emperor was depicted on his coinage, see: C. Morrison, 'Displaying the Emperor's Authority and *Kharaktèr* on the Marketplace', P. Armstrong (ed.), *Authority in Byzantium* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 65–82; Leo VI criticised recent emperors for demonetising coinage that bore the image of emperors other than themselves: Leo VI, *Novels,* lii (ed. Noailles and Dain, p. 201); on the emergence of aniconic coinage as a means of integrating the two currency zones under Umayyad control, and simultaneously expressing a specifically theocratic (rather than monarchical) idea about caliphate: L. Treadwell, 'Abd al-Malik's Coinage Reforms: The Role of the Damascus Mint', *RN*, ser. 6, 165 (2009), pp. 357–81; cf. S. Heidemann, 'The Merger of Two Currency Zones in Early Islam. The Byzantine and Sasanian Impact on the Circulation in Former Byzantine Syria and Northern Mesopotamia', *Iran*, 36 (1998), pp. 95–112.

[355] On Khazar minting, see: T.S. Noonan, 'What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century?', *AEMA*, 3 (1983), pp. 265–81; R. Kovalev, 'What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the Monetary History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century? Question Revisited', *AEMA*, 13 (2004), pp. 97–129; Olsson, 'Coup d'état', pp. 504–7; on textiles, see §4.4 below.

[356] A.B. Weiner, 'Why Cloth? Wealth, Gender, and Power in Oceania', in A.B. Weiner and J. Schneider (eds.), *Cloth and Human Experience* (Washington, 1989), p. 36.

provides advice on how to rebut excessive claims on the empire's resources, whether in the form of vestments, military technology or potential brides.[357] The relationships established at the frontiers of empire could enable accumulations of power that were beyond the direct control of the imperial centre which had helped set the process in motion.[358] This was also understood at the other end of Eurasia, where enormous quantities of silk were exported from Tang China to the North-West.[359] Jonathan Shepard has addressed the problem of 'demand management' and the risk of 'dilution of the brand' in Byzantine distribution of, and restrictions on, the release of crafted goods and technical skills to peoples outside the empire: the focus of this chapter will be on the relationship of a society to several different 'superordinate centres', and the specific role of goods promoted as currencies from such centres.[360]

The decisions about the burial deposition of the textiles reflect local resolutions of the problem of how to keep-while-giving by early medieval communities in the North-West Caucasus. These decisions were shaped by the specific pressures created by location on the periphery and intersection of large-scale circuits of accumulation. The previous chapter emphasised the importance of local ecology, microclimate and local decision-making in determining the social structure of the inhabitants of the Kislovodsk Basin. At the same time, it was indicated that changes in a much wider world could also have a decisive effect on how people of the region interacted with each other, their ecosystem and their built environment. This chapter will explore

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[357] *DAI,* ch. 6, lines 6-11; the Pechenegs may receive 'purple cloth, ribbons, loosely woven cloth, gold brocade, pepper, scarlet or "Parthian" leather' [βλαττία, πράνδια, χαρέρια, σημέντα, πέπεριν, δερμάτια ἀληθινὰ Πάρθικα]; ch. 13, lines 13–194, pp. 52–3, 66–77.

[358] cf. J. Shepard, 'Trouble-shooters and Men-on-the-spot: the Emperor's Dealings with Outsiders', in *Le relazioni internazionali nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 2011), pp. 698–703.

[359] Tang legislation such as an edict of 714, forbidding the sale to foreigners of polychrome patterned silks, damasks, gauzes, crepes, embroideries and other fine silk, mirrors Byzantine restrictions on the export of certain categories of silk: X. Liu, *Silk and Religion. An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People, AD 600 – 1200* (Delhi, 1996), pp. 14–18; on 'silk as money' in China and in Inner Asia, see the special issue of *JRAS*, ser. 3, 23:2 (2013), in particular articles by V. Hansen, H. Wang and E. Trombert.

[360] J. Shepard, 'Orthodoxy and Northern Peoples: Goods, Gods and Guidelines', in L. James (ed.) *A Companion to Byzantium* (Chichester, 2010), pp. 171–86; id., 'Imperial Outliers: Building and Decorative Works in the Borderlands and Beyond', in P. Stephenson (ed.), *The Byzantine World* (London, 2010), pp. 372–85. On the concepts of 'acquisitional societies' and 'superordinate centres': M. Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade and Power* (Austin, 1993).

the effects of contacts with people and objects from distant places on relations of power between people within small-scale communities of the North West Caucasus.

4.2 More cemeteries

Three cemeteries are the central focus of the following discussion: Moshchevaia Balka, Khasaut and the cemeteries at Nizhnii Arkhyz (see Maps I, IV, V). They are all located high in the mountains, close to routes leading from the north towards the Black Sea. Moshchevaia Balka is located at 938 m above sea level, over a small stream that feeds into the Bol'shaia (Greater) Laba river, a left-tributary of the Kuban' river. A few kilometres further up the Laba are the passes into Abkhazia, the largest of which is the Sanchara pass (2589 m), leading down towards the Black Sea coast. The Sanchara pass is open only 5 months of the year; the Azapsh pass (2497 m) is an alternative 'winter' pass, which was frequently used by local shepherds in the 1980s for taking flocks from the Bol'shaia Laba over into Abkhazia, when Savchenko was working there.[361] Both passes lead to the village of Pskhu, from which the descent to Pitsunda on the Black Sea coast is 63 km.[362]

Nizhnyi Arkhyz is located on the Zelenchuk river, another left-tributary of the Kuban', further east, but also mainly accessible to the Black Sea by way of a crossing into the Bol'shaia Laba valley and from there by the same passes as from Moshchevaia Balka. A fortification of unknown date defends the Arkhyz basin from the south at the confluence of the Psysh and Kizgych rivers, which turn into the Bol'shoi Zelenchuk. The main route south from there follows the Arkhyz River, a left tributary of the Psysh, to the confluence with the river Dukka, and then crosses from there over

[361] The use of these passes is now a sensitive political issue between the governments of the Russian Federation, Georgia, the *de facto* independent state of Abkhazia, and the regional government of Karachaevo-Cherkessia.
[362] Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', pp. 5–8, 165–70; Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 33; useful map in Roth, [Review], p. 533.

to the river Pkhiia, a tributary of the Bol'shaia Laba. Local foresters and hunters informed Evgenii Savchenko in the 1980s that flocks are routinely driven from the Bol'shoi Zelenchuk to the Bol'shaia Laba by this pass, as they no doubt would have been in the early middle ages.[363]

Nizhnyi Arkhyz would become the site of a significant settlement with a large number of Christian churches from the tenth century, but there are also a series of non-Christian cemeteries, functioning from the late seventh century until as late as the eleventh century in the vicinity of the site. As many as 3,000 burials have been counted for the cemeteries surrounding the site. Cemetery 1 is located on the right side of Podorvannaia Balka, a right tributary of the Bol'shoi Zelenchuk, to the south of the settlement. Remains of buildings similar to those in the settlement are preserved in this gulley. The rock burials stretch along a distance of 1500 m, on rocky outcrops in the cliff at heights of 15 to 250m above the stream. Around 1000 burials have been counted, including a small number of collective graves and a single catacomb-style burial. Cemetery 2 is on the right slope of Tserkovnaia Balka, not far from the North Church of Nizhnhi Arkhyz, and has the appearance of 'a smaller copy of cemetery 1', with around 200–250 rock burials and around 20 semi-underground collective burials nearer to the church. Cemetery 3 stretches for almost 7 kilometres along the left bank of the Bol'shoi Zelenchuk and contains around 1500 rock burials and around 10 collective burials. A fourth cemetery has a further 150 rock burials[364]

Khasaut, further east still, is located below Mount Bermamyt, above the Kislovodsk basin. Climbers' reports of up to 500 graves may be an exaggeration, but the inaccessibility of the burials makes it hard to ascertain exactly.[365] These cemeteries are located higher in the

[363] Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', pp. 158–9.
[364] O.V. Orfinskaia, 'Tesktil' VIII-IX vv. iz kollektsii Karachaevo-Cherkesskogo muzeia: tekhnologicheskie osobennosti v kontekste kul'tury rannesrednevekovoi Evrazii' (RNIIPKN, Dissertation – Candidate of Historical Sciences, Moscow, 2003), pp. 467–70; V.A. Kuznetsov, *Nizhnyi Arkhyz v X-XII vv. K iistorii srednevekovykh gorodov Severnogo Kavkaza* (Stavropol, 1993), pp. 22–3, 117–56.
[365] Minaeva counts a total of around 75 graves. The dimensions of the burials are similar to those at Moshchevaia Balka: lengths of 1.62–1.90 m, widths of 0.60–0.90 m and heights of 0.60–0.90 m: T.M. Minaeva. *K istorii Alan Verkhnego Prikuban'ia po arkheologicheskim dannym* (Stavropol, 1971), pp. 99–103.

mountains than the Kislovodsk Basin, and their sheltered position between the Great Caucasus Range and the Skalistii ('Rocky') Range gives them a cooler, drier climate than they would otherwise have.[366] These climatic factors, and the specific construction of the burials (dried before use through the burning of grass on the floor, and then hermetically sealed with plaster over the entrance stones and walls), has enabled exceptional preservation of human remains and of the textiles and other organic materials with which people were buried.[367]

These cemeteries functioned between the seventh and tenth centuries. In the late nineteenth century Russian settlers discovered naturally mummified human remains dressed in exotic silks in burials on a sandstone terrace above the right bank of the stream that probably gained the name 'Moshchevaia' ('Relic') as a consequence.[368] The terrace was protected from rainfall by the overhanging cliff-face.[369] At the time the traces of settlement would still have been evident on the plateau above the terrace, although it was later destroyed by the development of the timber business in the area in the 1960s and 1970s. Archaeological investigation of the cemetery began in 1901, almost two decades after Maksim Kovalevskii had begun his investigation of Khasaut.[370] Some of the materials from Moshchevaia Balka were transferred to Moscow from that time. Nonetheless, the international fame of this site only began to develop from the late 1960s, when Anna Ierusalimskaia, a textile expert at the Hermitage in Leningrad started to work on the materials that had by that point been transferred there.[371] She began to publish articles indicating

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The site was investigated by Maksim Kovalevskii in 1885 and 1886, with help from residents in the Balkar aul of the same name who took the small expedition up to the cliff face from their aul, 12 km away: I.I. Ivaniukov and M.M. Kovalevskii, 'U podoshvy El'borusa: ocherk', *Vestnik Evropy* (1886), 1, pp. 101–2; B.A. Kaloev, *M.M. Kovalevskii i ego issledovaniia gorskikh narodov Kavkaza* (Moscow, 1979), pp. 20–1, 43–7.

[366] Vavilov, 'Gornoe zemledelie', p. 594.

[367] Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', pp. 110, 117–19.

[368] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 10.

[369] Although Savchenko reports that falling rocks from the latter made archaeological investigation of the cemetery hazardous during the month of July: Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', p. 14.

[370] Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', p. 8; Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 17.

[371] Starting with: A.A. Ierusalimskaia, 'Tkan' s Bakhramom Gurom iz mogil'nika Moshchevaia Balka', *TGE*, 5 (1961), pp. 40–50. In 1956, Mitina reported that the 'collection has not yet been studied (no archive materials have been found yet), and contains various materials of different types and from different times, from the first century BCE to the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries CE'. However, she also identified fragments of a silk sleeve (Inv. Kz-5036), with repeating medallion image with symmetrical seated human

the presence of silks originating from China to the Mediterranean, and argued that these finds indicated the functioning of a northern branch of the Silk Road from the seventh century onwards.[372] Archaeological expeditions to Moshchevaia Balka in the 1960s and 1970s revealed that the site had been badly disturbed, and no attempt was made to establish a stratigraphy of the cemetery until Evgenii Savchenko began his investigations of the site in the 1980s.[373] Savchenko came to the conclusion that there were many more burials than previous investigators had thought: he counted 568, divided across five different sections of the cemetery. He also convincingly demonstrated that some sections of the cemetery continued to function into the tenth century, rather than to the ninth century as Ierusalimskaia argued.[374]

Burials at Moshchevaia Balka were in stone tombs (83.6 %), niches in the rock face (6.9 %), or in stone tombs constructed inside niches (9 %).[375] The tombs were rectangular in shape, made from sandstone blocks, laid flat in three to five rows. Sometimes fragments fallen from the roof of the cliff would serve as one of the walls. The tombs were dried out before deposition of the dead by burning the base and then covered with thin blocks. Wooden planks or sandstone blocks covered the tombs, and the construction was plastered with clay mixed with straw and whitened with chalk. The tombs were laid out in rows, extending from the earliest burial. Burials in cut or naturally formed niches in the rock face, or in boulders lying on the terrace, were shaped to have

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figures depicted driving spears into smaller kneeling figures, as dating from the second half of the first millennium CE, compared it with Coptic and Iranian models, and suggested a possible south Caucasian origin for the fabric: Ia. Mitina, 'Fragment shelkovoi tkani iz Moshchevoi Balki', *SGE*, 10 (1956), pp. 41–3, at p. 41 n. 1; Ierusalimskaia subsequently identified the image as depicting Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, a common theme in Coptic art, but argued it had in fact been woven in Sogdia in the seventh century (she classified it with her Zandanījī 1 group of textiles, for which see §4.4 below): A.A. Ierusalimskaia, 'O severokavkazkom "shelkovom puti" v rannem srednevekov'e', *SA* (1967), 2, pp. 61, 65, 74; id., *Die Gräber*, pp. 252–3, No.VIII/36; id., *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 112–13, 145–7; D. Shepherd, 'Zandanījī Revisited', in M. Flury-Lemberg and K. Stollies (eds.), *Documenta Textilia: Festschrift für Sigrid Müller-Christensen* (Munich, 1981), p. 109; Liu, *Silk and Religion*, p. 177 n. 4.

[372] Ierusalimskaia, 'O severokavkaskom "shelkovom puti"', pp. 55–78.

[373] Using, for example, the traces of plaster as a guide to the stratigraphy of the different burials: E.I. Savchenko, 'Issledovanie mogil'nika Moshchevaia Balka', *AO-1980 g.* (1981), pp. 116–17; id., 'Issledovanie mogil'nika Moshchevaia Balka', *AO-1981 g.* (1983), pp.131–2 ; id., 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', pp. 86–98.

[374] E.I. Savchenko, 'Moshchevaia Balka – uzlovoi punkt Velikogo Shelkovogo puti na Severnom Kakvaze', *RA*, 1 (1999), pp. 125–41; cf. Roth, [Review], p. 528.

[375] Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', pp. 99–103.

barrel vaults, sealed with stone blocks and plastered with clay and whitened in the same manner. Adult men were buried on their backs, while women and children were mainly buried lying on their right. The exceptional preservation of the bodies and the organic material buried with them was facilitated by the construction, which ensured lack of moisture and decent ventilation.[376] The cemetery functioned over several centuries. Section A was the oldest part of the cemetery, functioning from the seventh to ninth centuries; subsequent sections functioned from the eighth to tenth centuries.[377] In each section of the cemetery, the earliest burials appear to have been those in naturally formed niches in the rock face, after which subsequent were laid out in rows around the earliest burials. Some tombs were also laid on top of earlier tombs. It is possible that this arrangement reflected kinship groups, with the earliest burial considered to be the ancestor of subsequent burials on the plot, although the anthropological data are insufficient to demonstrate biological descent between people buried on given plots.[378]

The previous chapter indicated the problems with basing ethnic identification on the basis of typologies of burial constructions. The burial constructions adopted at the sites discussed in this chapter are noticeably different from the catacomb burials of the Kislovodsk basin. The vaulted roof of the burials in niches, and the mode of deposition, from the side rather than from above, in some ways resemble the burial chamber of the catacombs, but the burials at Moshchevaia Balka lack the *dromoi* characteristic of the latter. Meanwhile, the principles behind the construction of the niche burials are also closely related to the burials in stone tombs (the sealing with stones, the plaster, the whitening with chalk), where deposition would have been from above, and where there is not necessarily a vaulted roof.[379] The variation between different types of rock burial was discussed in the last chapter, where the hypothesis that cut rock burials reflect Alan practice, while natural niches reflect local practice, was questioned. The possibility for a significant range

[376] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 33–7.
[377] Savchenko, 'Issledovanie' (1981); id., 'Issledovanie' (1983).
[378] Savchenko, 'Problemy skal'nykh mogil'nikov', pp. 97–8.
[379] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 37–8.

of different burial practices by people who in other respects closely imitate each other's material culture is indicated, for example, by the horse burial found adjoining a rock burial in the Khasaut cemetery.[380] This recalls the horse burials in *dromoi* in the 'Sarmatian' and 'Alan' burials, but finds no analogy in the burials from Moshchevaia Balka which otherwise so closely resemble those at Khasaut.

4.3 Adornment to the person

The burials at the three sites in question make it possible to reconstruct the dress of the people buried there with unusual clarity. [381] The materials used and the styles employed drew on resources and ideas from the Eurasian steppe and from the agrarian empires of the Near East, but also expressed local ideas about gender difference, stages of the life-course, social hierarchy, religious belief and attitudes towards the outside world. The specific ritual and funerary context needs to be kept in mind. The decisions made about how the body should be dressed, and the objects to be incorporated into the ritual, may have been specific to the occasion, and cannot be taken as a direct reflection of the 'continuous and unremarked process of innovation, by

[380] The tomb appears to belong to cemetery No.2 at Khasaut, and is known from a plan and drawings conducted by Runich in 1978–9, and is a stone construction containing three bodies, with an adjoining pit containing two horses. Kuznetsov dates the burial to the early eighth century on the basis of solar amulets usually dated to the eighth to ninth centuries, and fibulae usually dated to the sixth to eighth centuries, also in the burial inventory. He identifies two coins found with the burial as issues of the Sasanian emperor Kavādh I (488-531); in fact, the coins are probably a barbarian imitations of drachms of Hormizd IV (579-90) and Khosrow II (591-628). Gennadii Afanas'ev dates the Khasaut burial to the second half of the seventh century or turn of the eighth century on the basis of average delays between deposition of coins of Khosrow II, and on the basis of the similarity of much of the inventory with the third phase of his chronology at Mokraia Balka: V.A. Kuznecov, 'Deux tombes alaines des Ve-VIe s. à Hasaut et à Klin-Yar (Caucase du Nord)', in M. Kazanski and V. Soupault (eds.), *Les Sites archéologiques en Crimée et Caucase durant l'Antiquité tardive et le haut Moyen Age* (Cologne, 2000), pp. 167–70; Afanas'ev and Runich, *Mokraia Balka*, p. 43.

[381] 'Dress' rather than 'clothing', to avoid separation of body alterations (such as head-shaping) from the wider theme, since the body is also cultural: N. Lindisfarne-Tapper and B. Ingham, 'Approaches to the Study of Dress in the Middle East', in their N. Lindsfarne-Tapper and B. Ingham (eds.), *Languages of Dress in the Middle East* (Richmond, 1997), p. 4; J.L. Ball, *Byzantine Dress. Representations of Secular Dress in Eight- to Twelfth-Century Painting* (New York, 2005), pp. 3–4.

modification and drift', which characterised the use and production of material culture in ordinary social practice.[382]

The following reconstruction of the dress of men, women and children buried at the sites in question draws on the work of Zvezdana Dode on materials from Nizhnyi Arkhyz, Khasaut and other sites, alongside the Moshchevaia Balka materials published by Anna Ierusalimskaia, analysis of the materials of museum holdings in Karachaevo-Cherkessiia by Ol'ga Orfinskaia, and Elfriede Knauer's analysis of a caftan and leggings also from Moshchevaia Balka, now held in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.[383] The men wore short trousers, a leather belt, linen stockings held up with straps, a warm outer caftan, and an inner caftan, leather shoes without soles, a head covering and gloves.[384] Male head coverings took the form of rounded caps, and helmet shaped caps.[385] Women wore trousers, linen stockings and footwear similar to that of the men, but wore tunic-shaped dresses over them instead of caftans. The sleeves of the dresses resembled those of the male caftans. Where men carried personal effects on their belts, women used a pocket over their chest. Beneath the pocket was a vertical opening, longer for adult women than for girls.[386] Girls wore their hair open with a headband over their foreheads. Some also wore rounded caps and even helmet shaped caps, like men. Adult women (probably after childbirth, rather than marriage) wore their hair covered in more complex head coverings, with a cap and pouch for the plait, with a headband above and below the cap, and a long scarf covering the entire construction, which could either be draped across the shoulders, or tied round in a

[382] Lindisfarne-Tapper and Ingham, 'Approaches', p. 27, quoting S.R. Charlsley, *Wedding Cakes and Cultural History* (London, 1992), p. 133.
[383] Z.V. Dode, 'Kostium naseleniia Severnogo Kavkaza VII – XVII vekov (Rekonstruktsiia etnosotsial'noi istorii)' (IA RAN, Dissertation – Candidate of Science, 2006), pp. 87 – 236; id., *Srednevekovyi kostium narodov Severnogo Kavkaza. Ocherki istorii* (Moscow, 2001), pp.13–51, id., 'Kostiumy Alan VII-X vv. na rel'efnykh tsenakh grobnitsy s reki Krivoi' [1994], in A.B. Belinskii (ed.), *Materialy po izucheniiu istoriko-kul'turnogo naslediia Severnogo Kavkaza*, viii: *Krupnovskie chteniia: 1971–2006* (2008), pp. 522–3; Orfinskaia, 'Tekstil' VIII–IX vv.', pp. 29–61; Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 173–242; E.R. Knauer, 'A Man's Caftan and Leggings from the North Caucasus of the Eighth to Tenth Century: A Genealogical Study', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 36 (2001), pp. 125–54.
[384] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 212–33.
[385] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 184–8.
[386] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 206–8; Dode, *Srednevekovyi kostium*, p. 18.

turban.[387] Boys' clothes followed closely those worn by adult men, including smaller caftans. The boys' caps found at Nizhnyi Arkhyz resemble the tubeteikas worn now across much of the Turkic world.[388]

The Hermitage collection of materials from excavations at Moshchevaia Balka includes two whole men's caftans, as well as the upper part of a caftan, another fragment of a man's caftan, a fragment of child's caftan and a miniature caftan. Both of the men's caftans are long: a linen caftan with silk trimmings and fur lining, found in 1905, is 110 cm; another garment, made entirely from silk (representing an exceptional deposition of wealth), with a squirrel fur lining, found in two parts in excavations in 1969 and 1976, is 140 cm long.[389] The torso and a fragment of a sleeve of a man's linen caftan, 125 cm in length, and lined with fur, were found at Moshchevaia Balka in 1972, and are now in the Cherkessk collection. It was found together with a silk hat, lined with linen and edged with white fur.[390] A similar linen caftan held in Cherkessk, 130 cm in length, was found on the same expedition to Moshchevaia Balka, with silk decoration on the sleeves and collar.[391] The same collection holds a series of caftans and fragments from the cemeteries at Nizhnyi Arkhyz, including further items made from silk, as well as other linen caftans, with silk decorations.

Zvezdana Dode's analysis of the tailoring of a linen caftan without a lining found at Nizhnyi Arkhyz has revealed the complex construction of the sleeves to enable free movement of the arms in spite of the tight fitting of the body of the coat around the torso.[392] All of the caftans were fastened with the right side covering the left, with three or four buttons, either on the outside, or concealed.[393] In East Asia, the fastening of coats on the left was perceived as an important point

[387] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 174 – 84; Dode, *Srednevekovyi kostium*, pp. 19 – 22.
[388] Dode, *Srednevekovyi kostium*, p. 27.
[389] Inv. 6584, 4800, 6733, 4629, 6726: Ierusalimskaia, *Die Gräber*, pp. 151–3, No. II/139-40, 147, 155, 158; id., *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 213–20, 235–40.
[390] Orfinskaia, 'Tekstil' VIII–IX vv.', p. 274, No.1.1 (KChMZ 3971/88), No. 1.2 (KChMZ 3971/90).
[391] Orfinskaia, 'Tekstil' VIII–IX vv.', p. 280, No.1.20 (KChMZ 10269/1).
[392] Dode, *Srednevekovyi kostium*, p.14
[393] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 213–14; Dode, *Srednevekovyi kostium*, p. 14.

of distinction between the coats worn by Turkic and Iranic nomadic peoples and the Han Chinese, who tied their coats the opposite way.[394] Knauer also argues for the nomadic origin of the twisted fasteners (or 'frogs'), not found in Chinese garments until the early twelfth century.[395] A leather belt was worn over the top of the coat, fastening it around the waist. The caftans were cut for ease of horse riding. The adult men's lined outer caftans had long slits down either side of the skirts of the coat, slightly towards the back, while the inner caftans had a single slit down the middle of the back of the skirts (adolescent outer caftans were more simply cut, and had a single slit down the back). This would have helped to keep out the cold, while maximising freedom of movement. Ol'ga Orfinskaia has pointed out that the use of stirrups would have made the wearing of longer caftans, such as these, possible while riding.[396] We have already seen from Härke and Belinsky's find at Klin-Yar in the Kislovodsk basin that stirrups may have been in use in the region by at least the early seventh century. Orfinskaia appears to interpret the implication of the find in burial 341 at Klin-Yar III, with its *terminus post quem* established by the *solidus* of Maurice (r. 582–602) as indicating the adoption of stirrups in the North Caucasus *after* their adoption in the Byzantine Empire.[397] However, this does not follow. Transfer of this technology to the people living in the North Caucasus is as likely to have come from the steppe region, and the adaptation of the caftans indicates that it was an established part of the equipment of horsemen in the region when these cemeteries began to be used.

The Hermitage holds one particularly fine silk caftan, described by Ierusalimskaia as a 'chieftan's caftan' (Fig. 4.1).[398] The whole body of the caftan is made from a weft-faced compound samite silk twill with a green ground and a greenish-yellow repeating pattern.[399] The silk is patterned

[394] Dode, *Srednevekovyi kostium*, pp. 14–15.
[395] Knauer, 'Man's Caftan and Leggings', pp. 139–41.
[396] Orfinskaia, 'Tekstil' VIII–IX vv.', p. 31.
[397] See §3.4 above.
[398] Inv. 6584: Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 235–40; Ierusalimskaia, *Die Gräber*, p. 151, No. II/139, VIII/4, 24, 73; K. Riboud, 'A Newly Excavated Caftan from the Northern Caucasus', *Textile Museum Journal,* 4:3 (1976), pp. 21–42.
[399] 'Samite', derived from the Latin *examitum, samitum* calque on the Greek *hexamitos*, literally meaning 'six thread', refers to a weave with usually three threads on the main warp and three threads on the

with a repeating s*ēnmurw* facing right, enclosed in a pearl roundel. The *sēnmurw* is a mythical beast associated with Sasanian royal imagery.[400] The design and technical features of this textile closely parallel the pieces of silk associated with the reliquary of the head of St. Helena in the church of St. Leu in Paris, one piece of which is held in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Fig. 4.2), and with the shroud and cushion of St. Rémi in Rheims. A reference to them in the church inventory, and an inscription on the cushion describing Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims's commission to Alpheide to to make the cushion for St. Rémi, indicate a late ninth-century *terminus ante quem* for the latter.[401] No textiles from inside Iran survive with this imagery, although a monumental relief of Khosrow II at Tāq-e Bostān shows him wearing a caftan with *sēnmurw* roundel designs (Fig.4.3).[402] From Central Asia, the second register on the west wall of the wall-painting at Afrasiab, near Samarkand, possibly datable to 662 CE, depicts three ambassadors whom the inscription identifies as from Turantash, the ruler of Chaǧānīān in the upper and central valleys of the Surkhan-darya River, to the south of Sogdia (Fig. 4.4). One of the

binding warp. Its production requires the use of a draw-loom. The silk threads of the main samite fabric of the caftan are fine, and the dyed colours have retained their lustre, which is significant for differentiating this material from the 'Sogdian' fabrics, made with coarser yarn and with faded colours, discussed below: Riboud, 'Newly Excavated Caftan', pp. 25–6.

[400] In Avestan texts, the *sēnmurw* roosts in the Tree of Seeds, brings rain and has healing powers, and it was adopted as a Sasanian royal symbol: J. Allgrove McDowell, 'Textiles', in R.W. Ferrirer (ed.), *The Arts of Persia* (New Haven, 1989), p. 153. Nicholas Sims-Williams corrects the usual *sēnmurv* to *sēnmurw* in accordance with correct Middle Pahlavi spelling: 'The Sēnmurw Silk' [from the shrine of St. Helena at St. Leu in Paris, V&A Inv.: 8579-1863], *Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, London*, accessed 11 August 2016, at http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O85315/the-senmurw-silk-woven-silk-unknown/ [Online catalogue].

[401] The design of the shroud and cushion from the grave of St. Rémi in Reims closely mirror that of the St. Helena shroud, with crescent shapes enclosed in the small linking roundels, where in the Moshchevaia Balka silk, the roundels contain rosettes. The colour scheme in the St. Helena and Moshchevaia Balka silks is the same, whereas the St. Rémi design is red on a red ground. All are samite twills, with one binding warp and two main warps, with a Z-twist (twist to the right; a twist to the left is described as an S-twist): A. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving: AD 400 to AD 1200* (Vienna, 1997), pp. 188–9, M77a-b: St. Rémi shroud and cushion; pp. 219–20: comparison of *sēnmurw* silks: M609a (Brussels), M609b (Bonn), M610 (Florence), M611 (London), M612 (New York), M613a-b (Paris).

[402] The dating of the *ayvān* of the 'Great Grotto' at Tāq-e Bostān is controversial because of ambiguities in the carving of the ruler's crown, but it is usually attributed to Khosrow II. The ruler is shown as an intermediary with gods, as a warrior and as a hunter. The ruler as warrior in the second register (below the ruler receiving his crown from the gods in the upper register), is shown in full armour, with a long jousting lance and *sēnmurw* in roundels on his clothes. On the sides of the *ayvān*, are hunting scenes: a depiction of a boar hunt shows the ruler's coat with a large *sēnmurw* outside the roundels on his coat; his companions wear clothes with floral motifs and birds: G. Hermann, 'The Art of the Sasanians', in Ferrier (ed.), *The Arts of Persia*, pp. 76–9.

members of the embassy is dressed in a caftan with a *sēnmurw* pattern. The royal associations of the *sēnmurw* led Markus Mode to suggest the figure in question represented the final Sasanian emperor Yazdegerd III himself, although Sergei Yatsenko argues this is more likely to be *Pukar-zate*, the head of the embassy (the '*dapirpat'*), named in the inscription.[403] The Moshchevaia Balka garment has been tailored according to styles local to the North Caucasus, but using especially high quality silk fabric patterned with an unusual and exceptionally prestigious symbol deriving from Sasanian tradition.

The provenance of the material is not firmly established, although Anna Muthesius identifies this, and the related silks, as Byzantine productions.[404] Ierusalimskaia now refers to this material as 'Syro-Byzantine', dating it to the second half of the ninth century.[405] By this slightly clumsy term is simply meant that the silk could have come from either centre of production, although it is also the case raw silk was imported from 'Abbāsid Syria, or that the fabric could have been woven in Syria for a specifically Byzantine market.[406] The *Book of the Eparch*, from the early tenth century regulates the sale of silks imported from Syria, which were retailed by the guild of the *prandiopratai.*[407] Fragments of other silk textiles were also used in the construction of the caftan:

[403] Rather than Yazdegerd III, as in Markus Mode's interpretation: M. Mode, *Sogdien und die Herrscher der Welt. Türken, Sasaniden und Chinesen in Historiengemälden des 7. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. aus Alt-Samarqand* (Frankfurt, 1993), p. 20; id., *Court Art of Sogdian Samarqand in the 7th Century AD. Some Remarks to an Old Problem* [2002], accessed 11 August 2016, at http://www.orientarch.uni-halle.de/ca/afras/ [Web publication]; S.A. Yatsenko, 'The Costume of Foreign Embassies and Inhabitants of Samarkand on Wall Paintings of the 7th c. in the "Hall of Ambassadors" from Afrasiab as a Historical Source', *Transoxiana*, 8 (2004), accessed 11 August 2016, at http://www.transoxiana.org/0108/yatsenko-afrasiab_costume.html [Article in e-journal].

[404] Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, p. 278.

[405] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 235, 238.

[406] The explanation for the term offered in Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 100–1.

[407] Leo VI, *Book of the Eparch,* ch. 5 (ed. Koder, pp. 94–6). The commodity from which the name of the guild derives, τὰ πράνδια, should probably be translated as 'ribbons', or 'strips', which, when combined with the references in the same chapter to 'Saracen' (σαρακηνική) items from Syria and 'Baghdadikia' (βαγδαδίκια) garments from Baghdad, suggests the guild might almost be called the '*ṭirāz* merchants'. Freshfield's translation of πράνδια as 'made up goods from Syrian materials' seems both too specific and too loose: ch. 5.2; 9.6 (ed. Koder, pp. 94, 108); tr. E.H. Freshfield, repr. in *To eparchikon bilbion*, intr. I. Dujčev (London, 1970), pp. 239, 249; cf. *DAI* ch. 6, line 8 (ed. Jenkins, p. 52).

a fragment of a Byzantine silk with a representation of the hunt of Bahram Gur under the lapel, a hem made from Sogdian silk, and folded strips of Chinese silk used as coat fastenings.[408]

These coats, of which the *sēnmurw* caftan appears to be the most prestigious example, reflect traditions of riding coats with a long antiquity and wide usage among the Iranic and Turkic speaking peoples of the Eurasian steppe, and to settled peoples living even further afield.[409] The lining of the coats were adapted to the cold climate of the mountainous region inhabited by the people buried in the North Caucasian burial sites, while the cut of the coats indicates adaptation to riding practices enabled by the introduction of new technologies such as stirrups.[410] The materials from which the coats were made emanated from centres of silk production in China, Central Asia and the Mediterranean, while the imagery used drew on royal iconography from the Sasanian and Byzantine empires.

As a style of clothing worn within the core of the Byzantine Empire or the caliphates during the period in which these burial sites were functioning, such caftans hold a slightly more ambivalent position. While there are no Qur'ānic injunctions against the wearing of silk by men, a significant body of *ḥadīth* developed, proscribing the presence of silk thread next to the skin.[411] Richard Bulliet has shown the connection between the rise and eclipse of a distinctive Muslim aesthetic associated with cotton clothes, often trimmed with bands of inscribed textile (*ṭirāz*), and the development of cotton production in early Islamic Iran. In the early period, many of the same

[408] See §4.4 below for the identification of Sogdian silks. If Knauer is correct that Chinese garments did not use 'frogs' at this time, it is interesting that nonetheless Chinese textiles could be recycled in this way.
[409] S.A. Iatsenko, *Kostium drevnei Evrazii (iranoiazychnye narody*) (Moscow, 2006).
[410] For instance, the caftan with *sēnmurws* is lined with squirrel fur; the Hermitage collection also includes sheepskin lined linen and silk outer coats from Moshchevaia Balka: Inv.6695, 6732: A.A. Ierusalimskaia and B. Borkopp, *Von China nach Byzanz. Frühmittelalterliche Seiden aus der Staatlichen Ermitage Sankt Petersburg* (Munich, 1996), pp.28–32.
[411] 'God will surely admit those who believe and do the right […] they will be decked in bracelets of gold and of pearls; and of silk will be their garments': *Qur'ān* 22.23. *Ḥadīth* limiting the wearing of silk, except the amount indicated by the Prophet's index and middle fingers: 'To our knowledge, by that he meant embroidery (*al-a'lām*): al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ,* ed. and tr. M.M. Khan (Riyadh, 1997), vii, pp. 394–9: H.5828; cf. H.5829–30; 'Gold, silver, silk (*ḥarīr*) and *dībāj* are for them (disbelievers) in this world and for you (Muslims) in the Hereafter': H.5831; cf. H.5830–5; forbidding sitting on silk or *dibāj*: H.5837; but acceptable for resale or gift, in particular to women: H.5840–2; Liu, *Silk and Religion*, p. 135; Bulliet, *Cotton*, pp. 47–51.

scholars (*'ulamā*) transmitting the *ḥadīth* with restrictions on the wearing of silk were themselves cotton merchants.[412] However, Bulliet suggests that from the tenth century, ecological and political change combined to persuade the Islamic rulers of Iran of the need to diversify crop production away from the increasing dominance of cotton, at the same time that more conservative families with their origins in the Sasanian *diḥqān* landowning class were finally converting to Islam, and promoting the Muslim acceptance of elements of traditional Sasanian aesthetics, such as the wearing of silk caftans. At the same time, styles of male clothing quite at variance with the austere articles promoted by the scholars and cotton merchants had long been in fashion at the multi-ethnic 'Abbāsid courts at Baghdad and Samarra.[413]

Sumptuary laws on silk wearing operated quite differently in the Byzantine Empire, but a similar pattern may be observed, where metropolitan prejudices against the wearing of a style of garment, associated with both Sasanian traditions and the riding habits of the peoples of the steppe, were gradually eroded under the influence of provincial elites.[414] Jennifer Ball has shown the ubiquity of caftans, made from fabrics with large repeating roundel patterns such as those seen at Moshchevaia Balka, on donor portraits of Cappadocian aristocrats from the Middle Byzantine period.[415] The caftan was clearly distinguished from a long silk Byzantine garment called the *divetesion*, which was a tunic, rather than a coat that opened at the front.[416] In metropolitan contexts, the wearing of a caftan continued to be marked into the thirteenth century: Niketas Choniates makes a point of mentioning Andronikos Komnenos's peculiar appearance as he entered Constantinople in 1182 in a long violet-coloured coat open at the sides; by contrast, the will of a magnate of Cappadocian origin, Eustathios Boilas, from 1059, mentions the bequest of a

[412] Bulliet, *Cotton*, pp. 59–60.
[413] On the contrasting 'aesthetics represented by Sasanid brocade (*dibāj*) and Abbasid *ṭirāz*': Bulliet, *Cotton*, p. 56.
[414] For the classic study on the influence of steppe riding dress on Byzantine court costume, see: N.P. Kondakov, 'Les Costumes orientaux à la Cour Byznatine', *Byznation,* 1 (1924), pp. 7–49.
[415] Ball, *Byzantine Dress*, pp. 57–77.
[416] The *divetesion* is always described as silk and long, but was a form of tunic: Ball, *Byzantine Dress*, pp. 40–3.

purple caftan without comment.[417] Perhaps more surprisingly, Ball shows such clothes were also popular among the elites of Kastoria in northern Greece by at least the twelfth century. It is likely this was influenced by the presence of aristocratic families of Georgian and Armenian origins in the region, but it also indicates the ease with which such styles could be adopted on the peripheries of the Byzantine Empire. In both the Cappadocian and Kastorian portraits, *ṭirāz* bands, influenced by Islamic tradition, are also a recurring feature. [418]

The Cappadocian and Kastorian donor portraits, as well as documents such as the bequest of Eustathios Boïlas, reveal the wearing of turbans by aristocratic men in these provincial Middle Byzantine societies. In this, they shared in a custom familiar in the South Caucasus and the 'Abbāsid court.[419] In the North Caucasus, however, a very different type of headwear is found in male burials. Some headdresses from female burials, by contrast, might originally have been tied in figure-of-eight shapes as turbans for adult women. The two main types of headwear associated with adult male burials were pointed hats, and rounded caps. The tall pointed hat constructions were made from leather, with wood used to maintain the pointed construction, and covered with silk; other hats were made from a combination of leather, silk and linen.[420]

It is impossible to know whether such hats would have been worn in life, or whether they were made especially for funeral rites in order to symbolise more functional protective headwear worn in combat. The distinction between the tall pointed and the rounded caps may reflect relative

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[417] Niketas Choniates, *History,* ed. van Dieten, p. 252; Eustathios Boïlas, *Testament,* ed. Lemerle, p.24; S. Vryonis Jr., 'The Will of a Provincial Magnate, Eustathius Boilas (1059)', *DOP*, 11 (1957), p. 268; Ball, *Byzantine Dress*, pp. 46, 61.

[418] Ball, *Byzantine Dress*, pp. 65–74. At Karabaş Kilise a painted rock church with an inscription of Michael Skepides, *protospatharios,* Catherine, nun, and Nyphon, monk, dated to 6569 AM (1060/1 CE), a male figure, probably Michael Skepides, is depicted in a turban, with a front opening coat decorated with medallions containing animals and birds, worn over a robe; another male figure in turban, coat, and robe, has a pseudo-Kufic inscription on his turban: L. Rodley, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 199–200, figs. 38f, 38c; M. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th – 15th Centuries)* (Leiden, 2003), no. 8, p. 326; nn. 11, 12, 14, p. 327; no. 22, p. 329.

[419] 'Turbans… were a normal element of Cappadocian dress at least 200 years before they became fashionable in the capital': Ball, *Byzantine Dress,* p. 57.

[420] Inv. 4576, 6752: Ierusalimskaia, *Die Gräber*, pp. 144–5, No. II/13-14.

prestige. It does not simply reflect age distinctions, as young women (but not more mature women) have been found buried with both types of hats, while young boys have been found buried with '*tubeteika'* pyramid-shaped hats made from four panels, more closely resembling the pointed hats than the rounded caps. It is noteworthy that the taller forms of headdress do not appear to be associated with married women in the cemeteries in question. Thomas Allsen has shown how tall headgear of this type, with its origins in nomadic warrior headgear, later became associated with rulers' crowns and ultimately the headdress of married women in the Mongol period.[421] The possible association between higher status and the taller types of headwear recalls that between artificially elongated skulls found in Sarmatian and Alan burials in the Kislovodsk Basin, and elsewhere in the region, although not at the cemeteries at Moshchevaia Balka or Nizhnyi Arkhyz.

The women were in the cemetery were buried in tunic dresses, usually made from linen, with silk trimming on the collar, around the shoulders, the sleeves, the hem, and the side, as well as with decorative patches of fabric in the form of *orbiculi* (roundels), *tabulae* (diamonds) and *gammadiae* (gamma-shapes and inverted gamma-shapes).[422] The *khitōn* tunic (sown, rather than draped over the shoulders and pinned with *fibulae* in the style of the *peplos*) from the Mediterranean had long been integrated into the repertoire of female dress of the Iranic-speaking nomads of the steppe.[423] The cut of the sleeves (longer, and tighter fitting), though, and the forms of ornamentation reflect the influence of more recent developments in late Roman/Byzantine and early Islamic female costume in the Mediterranean region. Unlike the women in the latter region, however, the women buried in the Caucasus wore their tunic dresses over trousers and shoes exactly resembling those of the men of their society. They wore the

[421] T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire. A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 16–17.
[422] Dode, *Srednevekovyi kostium*, p. 18.
[423] Iatsenko, *Kostium drevnei Evrazii*, pp. 210–11; on the adoption of the *peplos* in female dress in a rim around the Roman Empire: P. Walton-Rogers, *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England. AD 450 – 700* (York, 2007), pp. 144–8.

tunics, one over the top of another, just as the men wore inner and outer caftans. The women's burial costumes cannot be interpreted as riding costumes, but the gendering of the distinction between riders and non-riders is certainly less marked than in Mediterranean burial contexts. Unlike the caftans, though, the tunics appear to have been unbelted. A characteristic feature of the tunics found at these cemeteries was the pocket over the front, with the left-side opening beneath; this was deeper for mature women, possibly to facilitate nursing.[424]

The distinction in the length of the openings at the front of the women's tunics corresponds with a distinction in types of headdress worn by women. Ierusalimskaia has suggested that the major change in veiling practices in a woman's life occurred at childbirth, rather than at marriage.[425] It has already been seen that some younger women have been found with hats similar to those found in adult male burials, while the mummified girl whose burial has been reconstructed in the Hermitage had a different headwear, with her hair uncovered, but tied with a diadem, and with a bracteate woven into her plait. Adult women, probably after childbirth, by contrast, appear to have had their hair entirely covered, at least for burial. Another mummified woman, who died at the age of around 40–45, and whose burial has also been reconstructed in the Hermitage, wore an oval linen cap, which covered her head and gathered her plait in a pouch behind her head. The cap was tied in place with a linen headband, covering a diamond-shaped silk decoration sown onto the front of the cap. The construction as a whole was covered with a long, wide tracery scarf, tied in a knot at the back and descending over her shoulders.[426] The nature of the materials varied, using a combination of locally sourced linen, and silks from as far afield as China and

[424] Dawson notes that openings of this type were standard for Byzantine men's tunics during the period, but that the deeper openings to facilitate nursing in equivalent women's under-tunics (*esophoria*), only appear in these North Caucasian cases: T. Dawson, 'Propriety, Practicality and Pleasure: the Parameters of Women's Dress in Byzantium, A.D. 1000–1200', in L. Garland (ed.), *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience, 800–1200* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 53. In this respect, the deep opening in the North Caucasian *esophorion* may have taken on an equivalent association with fertility to that attributed to the *peplos* in the contexts where the latter was worn: Walton-Rogers, *Cloth and Clothing*, p. 179.
[425] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 183.
[426] Burial 1, Sector 2: Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 66–7, 174–8.

Egypt, sometimes in the same headdress ensemble.[427] There may also have been alternative ways of arranging the headdress, sometimes draped and tied, otherwise tied in a turban. The important feature appears to have been the principle of fully covering the hair for mature women, probably mothers. The apparent importance of childbirth rather than marriage for veiling conventions indicates divergence from Christian and Muslim practice; the burial of some young women with headwear associated with adult men suggests a further divergence of gender roles from those usually associated with contemporary Christian and Muslim societies.[428]

The form of the headbands or diadems, meanwhile, can be associated with a pattern of headwear with a very wide currency in societies connected to, but often at a far remove from, Byzantium and the caliphate, from Ireland and England to Scandinavia. In early medieval northern and western European male and female dress, the specific marking of headbands in pictorial representations and written accounts indicates that their function went beyond that of holding veils or hair in place, and served a decorative and even symbolic function.[429] The valuable materials used for the diadems buried in the North Caucasian burial sites, and their adornment with coins in the case of the girls and younger women, indicates the same was true in this region.

In this sense, the diadems have a functional similarity with the belts worn over the men's caftans. Vera Kovalevskaia has argued that belts formed the basis for non-linguistic forms of communication about status and affiliation for warriors coming into contact with different societies. Belt buckles found from Mongolia to Italy reveal a common fashion across Eurasia in the sixth to seventh centuries. Chinese sources indicate the number of hoops on belts indicate the

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[427] Burial 8, Sector 2: reconstructed on a mannequin in the Hermitage: Iersualimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 174–8.

[428] Dawson argues that veiling practices may have been more flexible in both Byzantine and early Islamic societies than some of the more austere written sources, or modern stereotypes, allow: Dawson, 'Propriety', pp. 61–3.

[429] Walton-Rogers, *Cloth and Clothing*, p. 164; woollen and silk headbands from the tenth- to eleventh-century found in Dublin: E.W. Heckett, *Viking Age Headcoverings from Dublin* (Dublin, 2003); silk headbands in Birka: A. Geijer, *Birka.* III. *Die Textilfunde aus den Gräbern* (Uppsala, 1938); associated with male military roles, as in the icon of St. Michael (10th to 12th century) in Venice: D. Buckton *et al.*, *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice: The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Milan, 1984), pp. 141–7.

prestige of the wearer, while Byzantine and Persian sources variously emphasise the value of the metal, the quality of the craftsmanship and details of the design.[430] The number of finds of belt buckles at Moshchevaia Balka is relatively low, when compared with other North Caucasian cemeteries that are in other respects much less richly furnished, reflecting a general pattern at the cemetery for metal objects to be relatively poorly represented.[431] However, the exceptional feature of the Moshchevaia Balka, Nizhnyi Arkhyz and Khasaut cemeteries is once again the state of preservation of belts made from textiles, including linen, wool and silk.[432] The latter suggest a ceremonial function: the leather belts would have been more durable for the purposes of carrying possessions such as knives in everyday contexts. It is possible that the textile belts were made especially for deposition, while the leather belts were passed on for future use. If so, that might indicate a significant fact about which attributes were considered inalienably associated with the deceased, and which were redistributed within the burying community.[433]

Specially selected strips of textile were variously used for ornamentation of garments of clothing, whether in the style of late Roman tunic ornamentation or in the form of *ṭirāz* armbands, for headbands, and for belts. Among the materials found at the Moshchevaia Balka site are a small number of such strips with inscriptions in Arabic and Greek.[434] One silk strip is embroidered with a pseudo-kufic inscription.[435] The inscription repeats the first half of the *shahāda* formula *lā ilāha illā-llāh* ('There is no God but Allāh') in mirror image, suggesting the weaver did not understand the inscription. The presence of this type of formula on a strip of fabric suggests an imitation of

[430] V.B. Kovalevskaia, 'K izucheniiu ornamentiki nabornykh poiasov vi-ix vv. kak znakovoi sistemy', *Statistiko-kombinatornye metody v arkheologii* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 144–55; id. (ed.), *Komp'iuternaia obrabotka massovogo arkheologicheskogo materialia iz rannesrednevekovykh pamiatnikov Evrazii* (Moscow, 2000), ii.
[431] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 293–5.
[432] Orfinskaia, 'Tekstil' VIII–IX vv.', pp. 47–8, 339–40, 342, 344.
[433] cf. A.M. Klevnäs, *Whodunnit? Grave Robbery in Anglo-Saxon England the Merovingian Kingdoms* (Oxford, 2013), p. 73.
[434] Besides the *ṭirāz* band and the two Greek-inscribed ribbons in St. Petersburg and Stavropol, Ol'ga Orfinskaia mentions, but provides no description of, another Greek-inscribed woollen textile held in the museum collection in Cherkessk: Orfinskaia, 'Tekstil' VIII–IX vv.', p. 47.
[435] Inv. 6767: Ierusalimksaia, *Die Gräber*, pp. 242–3, No. VIII/12; Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 103–5, 140–1.

material released from *ṭirāz* workshops. There are numerous examples of such pseudo-Arabic writing on Byzantine objects, including textiles from this period.[436] The similarity between the Greek-inscribed and kufic-inscribed ribbons could reflect the pattern of acquisition: a specific appearance of ribbon was required, regardless of the content of the inscriptions. The mere fact of inscription in languages associated with prestigious neighbouring societies may have been more important than the meaning. The quality of embroidery can be perceived even without knowledge of Arabic or Greek.

However, the use of such materials may have reflected a more precise awareness of Byzantine and Muslim funerary practices. There are plentiful examples of Muslim burials with shrouds with inscribed *ṭirāz* bands attested for Egypt in the same period, where levels of textile preservation are analogous.[437] However, the use of such materials may have reflected a more precise awareness of both the administrative hierarchies and funerary practice in the Byzantine and Muslim worlds. A Greek inscription on another ribbon found at Moshchevaia Balka is a possible example. The Hermitage Museum and Stavropol Museum hold two pieces of red silk ribbon, found at the cemetery, although no report survives as to their exact find contexts, which closely parallel the pseudo-Arabic inscribed textile (Fig. 4.6).[438] The longer fragment (41.4 cm), held in

[436] I. Toth, 'Epigraphic Traditions in Eleventh-Century Byzantium. General Considerations', in A. Rhoby (ed.), *Inscriptions in Byzantium and Beyond: Methods – Projects – Case Studies* (Vienna, 2015), pp. 221–2; A. Cutler, 'Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab and Related Economies', *DOP*, 55 (2001), pp. 247–78; Alicia Walker's argument that pseudo-Kufic inscriptions in Byzantine contexts were seen as 'significant but obscure' (rather than merely 'meaningless but plausible') might apply equally well in this North Caucasian context: A. Walker, 'Meaningful Mingling: Classicizing Imagery and Islamicizing Script in a Byzantine Bowl', *Art Bulletin*, 90.1, 2008, p. 47; pseudo-Kufic textiles in Christian burials in Egypt: J. van der Vliet, '"In a Robe of Gold": Status, Magic and Politics on Inscribed Christian Textiles from Egypt', in C. Fluch and G. Halmecke (eds.), *Textile Messages: Inscribed Fabrics from Roman to Abbasid Egypt* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 23–67.

[437] See note above.

[438] The smaller fragment was found by local archaeologist V. Kaminskii in 1979 and taken to the Hermitage (Inv. 7777); the longer strip now in Stavropol was found in a heap created by the excavations in 1982: Ierusalimskaia, *Die Gräber*, pp. 251–2, No. VIII/34; id., 'Un chef militaire byzantine au Caucase du Norde? Le ruban en soie de Moscevaja Balka', in M. Restle, B. Borkopp and T. Steppan (eds.), *Lithostrōton. Studien zur byzantinischen Kunst und Geschichte. Festschrift für M. Restle* (Stuttgart, 2000), pp. 125–30; Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 133–6.

Stavropol, is embroidered with a dotted border and the following Greek inscription in gold thread:

…ΙΜΕ● ΧΑΙΡΕΕΝΔΟΞΕ●ΚΥΡΙΒΑΝΗΠΡΟΤΟΣΠΑΘΑΡΙΕ●ΑΝΘΗΣΣΥ[Η]ΝΕΟΝΗΧΦΑΙΔΡΥΗ[Ο][439]

The shorter piece (4.5 cm), held in St. Petersburg, is also red silk, with a gold doted border and inscription that reads:

ΛΙΕΟΠΡΟ

Both pieces are of identical width (1.1 cm), with uncial writing height 0.4 cm; however, the close resemblance of both to the *ṭirāz* band indicates that width cannot be taken as evidence that they are fragments of the same original strip. Anna Ierusalimskaia gives the following alternative translations of the first part, provided by V.S. Shandrovskaia:

> […]● vive (gloire à toi) ● vénérable (glorieux) Maître Jean (Ivane) protospathaire ● de [ta] prospérité et [ta] jeunesse [tu] te réjouis…[440]

She treats the second fragment as an undecipherable continuation, and suggests that the first fragment refers to a senior Byzantine military commander of Bulgarian origins, sent to the North Caucasus at some point after the early eighth century.[441] Andrei Vinogradov has argued that the shorter ribbon is unrelated and has reconstructed its reading as: Βασίλιε ὁ προτοσπαθάριε.[442] Meanwhile, he has provided an alternative reading of the long text:

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[439] Misspelt in Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 135; the correct reading is clearly legible at fig. 68b, p.134; A.Iu. Vinogradov, 'Grecheskie teksty iz Moshchevoi balki i poeticheskaia struktura vizantiiskikh akklamatsii', in N.N. Kazanskii (ed.), *Indoevropeiskoe iazykoznanie i klassicheskaia filologiia – XVIII (chteniia pamiati I.M. Tronskogo). Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii, prokhodivshei 23-25 iunia 2014 g.* (St. Petersburg, 2014), pp. 133, 134 n. 2.

[440] Ierusalimskaia, 'Un chef militaire', p. 126; rendered in the Russian: «...привет (вариант: слава) тебе, достопочтенный господин Ибане протоспафарий, ты процветаешь в молодости своей, торжествуешь (радуешься)...»: id., *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 135; Shandrovskaia's reading of ΑΝΘΗΣ ΣΥ[Ν] ΝΕΟΤΥΣ is rejected by Vinogradov, who instead suggests that the second sigma was accidentally substituted for an omicron, and offers the more grammatically correct reading of: ἀνθῇ σ<ο>υ ἡ νεότης: Vinogradov, 'Grecheskie teksty', p. 134 n. 2.

[441] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 135.

[442] i.e., with the same spelling of πρωτοσπαφάριε with an omicron as on the Stavropol fragment. For *protospatharioi* with the name Basileios, Vinogradov, 'Grecheskie teksty', p. 134, lists *PmbZ* #898, 899, 902,

[ἔντ]ιμε · χαῖρε, ἔνδοξε · κύρι Βάνη προτοσπαθάριε · ἀνθῇ σ<ο>υ ἡ νεότης · φαιδρύνη

…rejoice, glorious lord Vanē *protospatharios*; may your youth flourish; may…radiate…[443]

Interpretation of the Byzantine court title of *protospatharios* depends in part on the dating of the ribbon, but the absence of a precise archaeological context leaves this open to a date between the eighth and tenth centuries, which is to say, up to the end of the functioning of the cemetery.[444] The title had a higher and more specifically military status at the beginning of this period than the end.[445] The name on the longer strip indicates the title was bestowed upon, or claimed, by somebody of non-Greek origins. Ierusalimskaia identifies it as a Turkic form of the name Ἰωάννης, used by Byzantines of Bulgarian origins, but as Sorochan and Malakhov have noted, the form Ἰβάνης is not otherwise attested for the eighth or most of the ninth centuries.[446] Meanwhile, Vinogradov's alternative reading raises the possibility that the ribbon originally belonged to an Armenian aristocrat: there are several attestations for Βαάνης/Βαάνιος, Greek equivalents of the Armenian name Vahan for the eighth to tenth centuries, and Vinogradov has found the short form Βάνη in Georgios Monachos, although that remains the only other

940, 966, 973, 5227, for the eighth to ninth centuries; to these could be added a further 37 entries if the tenth century is included in the search, as a wider dating of the Moshchevaia Balka cemetery would allow.

[443] «радуйся, славный господин Ваний протоспафарий; пусть цветет твоя молодость, пусть сияет...»: Vinogradov, 'Grecheskie teksty', p. 134 and n. 2.

[444] S.B. Sorochan and V.S. Flerov, 'Lenta iz Moshchevoi Balki: problema tolkovaniia istochnika', *RA* (2015), 2, p. 116.

[445] N. Oikonomidès (ed.), *Les Listes de préséance byzantines de IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris, 1972), p. 22; Whittow, *Making*, p. 108.

[446] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 135; cf. Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, 2nd edn (2 vols., Berlin, 1958), ii, p. 136; Sorochan suggests the son of Tsar Symeon (893–927), referred to in the Greek sources as Ἰωάννης (cf. *PmbZ*, #22903), may have used this Slavicised version of the name; cf. a lead seal found in western Bulgaria dated to the 1040s–1070s with the inscription +Κ(ύρι)ε β)οή)θ(ει)/<τ>ῷ σῷ δού/<λ>ῳ Ἠβά/νν(η) 'Lord, save your servant Ivann(ē)'; Sorochan and Flerov, 'Lenta', p. 122; S.N. Malakhov, 'Protospafarii Ivan v kontekste vizantiisko-khazarskikh otnoshenii serediny IX v.', in *Vizantiia i Zapad (950-letie skhizmy khristianskoi tserkvi. 800-leti zakhvata Konstantinopolia krestonostsami.)* (Moscow, 2004), pp. 120–22; I. Iurukova, 'Numizmatichni i sfragistichni pametnitsi (867–1195/1203)', *Pernik*. Vol. 2: *Krepossta Pernik VIII–XIV v.* (Sofia, 1983), pp. 134–5, fig. IV.9.

example.[447] A Georgian or Abkhazian provenance is also conceivable, if the traditional Ἰβάνη reading is maintained.[448]

In Ierusalimskaia's interpretation, the ribbon belonged to a military official sent out from the imperial centre. Originally, she dated this to the early eighth century (influenced by the account of Leo the *spatharios*' adventures in the Caucasus, for which see below), but this would be very early for such a title; she and Afanas'ev have since adopted the suggestion of Malakhov that the ribbon was connected with Byzantine assistance to the Khazars in the building of the fortress of Khumara, perhaps in the early ninth century.[449] However, as we will argue in the next chapter, there is no necessary reason to believe the direct involvement of an imperial mission in the building of Khumara, and still less to link it to this specific ribbon.[450] Identifications of the bearer as an Armenian, Georgian or Abkhazian evoke the alternative possibility of the title having been bestowed upon a local aristocrat before the ribbon was taken by raiders from the north. It may be possible to go further, though, and suggest that the title was actually bestowed upon an inhabitant of the North Caucasus, especially if the ribbon is dated towards the end of the period in question. The title κύρος, as parallels from the Crimea indicate, was often used for local leaders, or beyond, the frontiers of direct imperial influence.[451]

The text of the ribbon indicates that it was perhaps made once its bearer had already died, as also suggested by way of parallel with the shrouds with *ṭirāz* bands. Andrei Vinogradov has linked the

[447] Vinogradov lists: Vahan (Βαάνης/Βαάνιος): *PmbZ* #710–27; *protospatharioi* in the second half of the ninth century: *PmbZ* #718, 720, 721; Βάνης: George the Monk, *Chronicle,* ed. de Boor, p. 707, line 7; *PLRE* III, q.v. Baanes; Vinogradov, 'Grecheskie teksty', p. 136; to these could be added *PmbZ* #20720, a *protospatharios* and the *strategos* of the Thrakesion, from the end of the ninth century to early tenth century.
[448] *PmbZ* #260, 1/add. gives the example of the Abkhazian ruler Ioanē Šavliani, on whom see: §5.3 below.
[449] Malakhov, 'Protospafarii', p. 12; the suggestion was adopted by G.E. Afanas'ev, 'Kto zhe deistvitel'no postroil Levoberezhnoe Tsimlianskoe gorodishche?', *RA* (2011), 3, p. 118; and Iersualimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 134.
[450] See: Sorochan and Flerov, 'Lenta', pp. 112–16, and §5.6 below
[451] Cf. the *kyros* of Gothia in the mountains of the Crimea, who betrayed its bishop John to the Khazars: *Life of John of Gothia,* ch. 4, ed. Auźepy, p. 81 (see §5.2 below); Flerov and Sorochan, 'Lenta', p. 111; S.B. Sorochan and K.D. Smychkov, 'Kiry vizantiiskogo Khersona: problemy statusa i datirovki', *PIFK*, 16:1 (2006), pp. 207–17.

text with Byzantine court acclamations, but his own catalogue of inscriptions from the North Black Sea region shows the invocation χαῖρε was also part of standard formulae for stone carved funerary inscriptions.[452] The emphasis on the youth (ἡ νεότης) of the *protospatharios* would seem superfluous in a court context, but is poignant in a burial context. Deliberate production for burial makes the idea that the ribbon was obtained through raiding less likely, unless grave robbing is envisaged.[453] If, as Ierusalimskaia and Malakhov have argued, the ribbon was made for somebody who travelled North Caucasus on an imperial mission, then its specifically funerary purpose would imply that special arrangements had to be made by both the local burial community and the companions or relatives of the young man to bring such an item to his final resting place. If, on the contrary, it belonged to a local inhabitant, it would indicate a fairly precise awareness of the meaning of the Greek text. Either way, it would suggest a denser pattern of cultural engagement than has usually been imagined.

This section of the chapter has concentrated on the clothing ensembles buried at the cemeteries of Moshchevaia Balka, Nizhnyi Arkhyz and Khasaut. It has shown how traditions of dress with a long antiquity and wide currency across the Eurasian steppe were adapted to the specific demands, and the new possibilities, created by life in the mountains of the North Caucasus in the early middle ages. It has shown how gender difference and different stages of the life-course were marked, which has revealed some notable divergences from contemporary Christian and Muslim practices in the Byzantine Empire and the 'Abbāsid caliphate, with childbirth rather than marriage apparently marked as the most important shift in a young woman's life, and with some young women buried with clothing attributes that might otherwise be associated with adult men. The specific context of funerary dress is distinct from everyday clothing: some items may have

[452] Vinogradov, 'Grecheskie teksty', pp. 136–8; *LSJ* q.v. χαίρω; for the use of imperative for leave-taking, as well as greeting, and hence for dying and sepulchral inscriptions: *IG* VII.203 (PHI7 No.143680), accessed 12 August 2016, at http://epigraphy.packhum.org/text/143680; in his publication of a fourth century Christian epitaph from Pantikapaion, Vinogradov notes that the PHI7 Database provides over fifty examples of the word in Christian funerary inscriptions: *IOSPE* V.273, accessed 12 August 2016, at http://iospe.kcl.ac.uk/5.273.html.

[453] cf. Klevnäs, *Whodunnit?*

functioned as substitutes for objects which remained in circulation among the living, and some may even have been removed from other burials specifically for deposition with the dead. Some parts of the clothing ensemble were evidently more inalienably associated with the buried person than others. This will have shaped selection of clothes for the primary burial rites, and will have influenced the choice of objects to be removed in secondary burial rites. Finally, the diversity of uses found for individual strips of imported textile, in particular silks, has been considered: from ornamentation of other garments, to headbands, to belts, to a possible role in funerary shrouds. Like coins, and glass beads, these strips of textile were versatile: there was a wide range of different ways in which they could be taken out of circulation in order to 'adorn the person'. At the same time, such textiles came already freighted with specific meaning, generated by the quality of the material, its imagery and any inscriptions, bearing the marks of its origins. The following section will turn to the systems of circulation that brought the materials to the cemeteries of the North-West Caucasus.

4.4 Currency systems

A suggestive source for understanding the patchwork nature of the garments at Moshchevaia Balka was brought to light in Mitina's initial publications of the material.[454] In his *Allgemeine historisch-topographische Beschreibung des Kaukasus* (1796), the diplomat and traveller Jacob Reineggs described the difficult process of travelling through the Darial Pass (cf. Fig. 4.8) from Georgia into Russia in the late eighteenth century:

> There are certainly other roads, to come from Russia over the Caucasus to Georgia; but this through the *Porta Caucasia*, along the Terek, as neck-breaking as it is, is always reckoned the most convenient; because the porters, who are accustomed to carry the goods of the merchant or of the traveller over the mountains, live in the neighbourhood, and are to be had in sufficient numbers.[455]

[454] Mitina, 'Fragment shelkovoi tkani', pp. 41–3.
[455] J. Reineggs, *Allgemeine historisch-topographische Beschreibung des Kaukasus* (2 vols., St. Petersburg, 1796–7), i, pp. 226–8; tr. C. Wilkinson, *A General, Historical, and Topographical Description of Mount*

Whoever wishes to travel from Georgia to Russia, must deposit his packages or bales at the last Georgian village, Steppan-Zminda; and have them carried by the Ossi over the mountains as far as Schimmitt, a distance of thirty versts.[456] A bale must not weigh more than from 200 to 240lbs.; and generally three men are appointed to each, partly to carry alternately, and partly to assist and support the bearer, if he should happen to make a false step over those dangerous rocks. The expense of porterage for each bale must be paid with six shirts; or, what is the same thing, with six coarse pieces of linen, nine ells long, which are worth about four roubles. When the merchant or traveller is arrived in Schimmitt, he must pay the Takaur tribes assembled there six other pieces of linen, as bridge-toll; and, not to expose himself to any danger, must besides satisfy all remaining demands. When at last, after great difficulty, patience, screaming, and hollooing, that tribe is satisfied, and returned home, then Achmed demands for lodging, trouble, and protection, just as much as has been paid to the whole tribe, without regard to the part he has shared. But even then the traveller is not at the end of his troubles; for some versts below Schimmitt, the road is guarded by a small watchtower, with two lurking Ossi, where high, steep rocks to the left, and a deep precipice on the right, scarcely allow a narrow foot-path. Here also two pieces of linen must be deposited, and then everyone may continue his journey in peace, if other nations, the Kisti, &c. do not attack him.[457]

The manner in which these people divide the linen, is likewise remarkable. Instead of the ell they use the measure from the extreme point of the middle finger to the elbow, and ten of those lengths make the measure for a shirt, or a piece of cloth. The porters divide what they have received in a similar way. The family of the Takaur tribe does the same; but as the elders who have a right to it are numerous, no one trusts the other, and each

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Caucasus. With a Catalogue of Plants Indigenous to the Country (2 vols., London, 1807), i, pp. 168–80. The advertisement accompanying the English translation in 1807 emphasises the geopolitical significance of the work in the light of renewed hostilities between Russia and Persia, and the establishment of a Franco-Persian alliance.

[456] Having passed through the Darial pass from the north, Julius von Klaproth spent the night of 25–6 December 1807 camping by the quarantine house at Stepantsminda: 'Stephan-Tzminda, which signifies St. Stephen, is called by the Ossetes Ssena, and by the Russians Kasbek, because it is the residence of a Georgian nobleman, of the family of Tzobikhani schwili [Chopikashivili], whose ancestors long since received from the Georgian kings the title of Kasbek or Kasibeg: he holds the office of circular-captain and receiver of the taxes of the district of Chewi [Khevi]': J. von Klaproth, *Travels in the Caucasus and Georgia Performed in the years 1807 and 1808,* tr. F. Shoberl (London, 1814), p. 380. In a letter of 10 November 1811, Frederika von Freygang describes her stay at the residence of Chopikashivili, whom she describes as 'a colonel in the Russian service, chief of a native clan': F. von Freygang, *Letters from the Caucasus; to which are added, the Account of a Journey into Persia in 1812, and an Abridged History of Persia since the Time of Nadir Shah,* tr. from French (London, 1823), pp. 59–75; cf. Fig. 4.7. The house of Kasibeck's widow was subsequently visited by the Scottish diplomat Sir Robert Ker Porter in 1817–20: R.K. Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia, &c. &c. During the Years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820* (2 vol., London, 1821–2), i, p. 77. The settlement of Stepantsminda, officially called Kazbegi from 1925 to 2006, has since reverted to its older name. The route described by Reineggs next must be Chmi (Tsymi in Ossetian), which is described in the Georgian geography of Prince Vaḥushti Bagrationi (ca. 1696–1772) as a 'grand bourg avec des tours, habité par des Osses Sidamons, dont les chefs actuels professent le mahométisme', although the latter also describes further west 'le grand bourg à tourelles de Tchimith, sembable en tout à Tchim': Vaḥushti Bagrationi, *Description géographique de la Géorgie*, ed. and tr. M. Brosset (St. Petersburg, 1842), p. 441. The Tagaur (Oss. Tægiaty) clans belonged to the eastern Iron (*sic*) group of Ossetians, distinct from the western Digor group. They were evidently dominant at Chmi as well as Tsimiti (Oss. Tsymiti), which Vaḥushti Bagrationi describes as 'la rivière de Thagaour'.

[457] John Baddeley writes that 'the Kisteens or Mountain Tchetchens' seized Kizliar in 1768, and in an appendix reproduces a song he heard 'recited in a robber castle deep in the wild country of the Kists, to the east of the Georgian road': J. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London, 1908), pp. 34–5, 483–5.

> demands his share immediately; so that the cloth must be cut into as many pieces, as there are persons present who have a just claim, and then everyone returns home contented. Hence we seldom find an Oss of that tribe, whose shirt is not made of a great many different pieces of linen.
>
> Yet all the impediments which travellers meet with, must now soon be removed; for by command of Catherine II the road over Caucasus to Georgia is to be levelled. And the forts of Potemkin, Grigoropol, and Vladikavkass already protect the high road from Mosdok to Schimmitt.[458]

In the late eighteenth century, textiles operated as a currency among the Ossetians and neighbouring peoples of the central North Caucasus. Textile strips were a means of payment, a divisible measure of value and a medium of exchange. At the same time, they were part of a social system for regulating contacts with outsiders, and the effects of such contacts on social relations between and within the Ossetian tribes. Reineggs appears exasperated that he has to pay the porters at all, but is even more baffled by the rituals that precede and follow the travellers' admission to the passes. The patchwork of strips of fabric on the Ossetians' clothes are interpreted by Reineggs as a side-effect of their mutual distrust; but they could equally be seen as an outward display of their commitment to sharing the wealth and information provided by contact with outsiders. The presence of Russian forts on either side of the mountain passes were a forceful reminder that outsiders were looking for a way to impose their own terms.[459]

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[458] Potto records that a line of 'new redoubts and forts, beginning with Mozdok, and ending with Vladikavkaz fortress at the very foot of the mountains' were built by Pavel Sergeevich Potemkin (nephew of Grigory Aleksandrovich Potemkin-Tavricheskii, after whom Potemkin fort was named) in 1783–4, following the signing of the Treaty of Georgievsk (24 July 1783) with King Irakli II, leading the establishment of Georgia as a Russian protectorate. Grigoriopolis was located on the Malaia Kabarda and Potemkin on the Terek, near Tatartup ('Verkhnii Dzhulat'). Potto writes that a road through the Darial pass was constructed by 800 soldiers under Potemkin's command in the summer and autumn of 1783: V.A. Potto, *Kavkazskaia voina* [1899] (5 vols., Stavropol', 1994), i, pp. 125–8. The situation before Potemkin's construction of these forts is described by Baddeley: 'the northern half of the route was in the hands of the Ossietines, who levied toll on all passers-by, and were so powerful and truculent in these, their native, fastnesses, that in 1772 a force of 600 men with two guns was barely sufficient to relieve the Academician Guldenstedt, who with his party had been cut off by them at the village of Stepan Tsminda'. Baddeley also emphasises the strategic importance and historical significance of Tatartup: Baddeley, *Russian Conquest*, pp. 20, 50, 416.

[459] Cf. Richard White's description of interactions on the Columbia River in the nineteenth century: 'Whites regarded the space at the Cascades and the Dalles as open, as culturally empty. Indians regarded it as full. In a space that brought together many different peoples, Indians expected gifts to mediate and smooth passages through this social maze. Too often whites replaced gifts with force; they resented what they perceived as theft and pillage. The space became uniquely violent': R. White, *The Organic Machine* (New York, 1996).

As Reineggs predicted, this currency system was held in place by a combination of geographical necessity, force of arms, and established custom among the highlanders until it was forcibly replaced by Russian military might and infrastructural projects. The destruction of the currency system was also the destruction of a social system. The people living over the passes between the Black Sea coast and the North Caucasian steppe a thousand years earlier were also faced with the opportunities and social threats presented by people from richer and more powerful societies who desired to make their way through their territory. The patchwork character of many of the garments discussed already in this chapter is suggestive of precisely the sort of systems of reckoning and redistribution described by Jacob Reineggs.

The *Chronicle* of Theophanes contains an account of a mission by the future Byzantine emperor Leo III (r. 717–41) to the North-West Caucasus which sheds some light on how the inhabitants of the region responded to powerful outsiders and their wealth in the early eighth century.[460] The passage in question belongs to a layer of material within the early ninth-century, and generally piously anti-iconoclast, *Chronicle* that may have its origins in circles close to Leo himself early in his reign. The account is shaped by desire to blacken the reputation of the emperor Justinian II (r. 685–95, 705–11), and to romanticise the exploits of Leo, and doubtless reflects the kinds of cultural misunderstandings seen in the Reineggs passage; but, like the latter, it may also record the response of a relatively recent visitor to the region, rather than a much later imagining.[461] According to the passage, Justinian saw Leo as a political threat and had sent him away to the Caucasus. At the time in question (ca. 705 CE), the Umayyads 'were in control (ἐπικρατοῦντων) of Abasgia, Lazica and Iberia'. The context indicates that Umayyad 'control' in western Georgia did not extend to a direct Muslim presence on the Black Sea coastline, since Leo appears to have

[460] Theophanes, *Chronicle*, s.a. 6208 (ed. de Boor, i, pp. 391–5); cf. M. Canard, 'L'aventure caucasienne du spathaire Léon, le future empereur Léon III', *REArm*, 8 (1971), pp. 353–7.
[461] D. Afinogenov, 'The History of Justinian and Leo', in Zuckerman (ed.), *La Crimée*, pp. 181–200; id., 'The Source of Theophanes' Chronography and Nikephoros' Breviarium for the years 685–717', *Khristianskii vostok*, n.s. 4 (2005), pp. 3–14; Martin-Hisard comments that Leo carried out his mission in the North Caucasus 'brilliantly' –certainly the impression the passage is designed to create: Martin-Hisard, 'La domination byzantine', p. 147.

been able to disembark safely in Phasis, and then to travel up to Apsilia (presumably, by boat), with local guides (ὀλίγους δὲ λαβὼν τῶν ἐντοπίων), through which he travelled across the Caucasus Mountains into Alania.[462]

Leo had been sent with money (τὰ χρημάτα) to pay the Alans to invade Abasgia. He left the money at Phasis before travelling onwards but, according to Theophanes's source, Justinian then deliberately had the money removed in order to leave Leo exposed. Meanwhile, the Alans welcomed their guest and raided Abasgia for captives.[463] The 'lord of the Abasgians' then sent a message to the Alans warning them that Leo had deceived them, since the money had been taken away, and offered them 3,000 *nomismata* to hand over Leo as a prisoner.[464] The Alans initially refused, arguing that that they had obeyed Leo out of 'love for the emperor', rather than for the money. They were more accommodating when the Abasgians sent further emissaries offering 6,000 *nomismata.* However, they explained to Leo that their intention was in fact to trick the Abasgians:

> As you can see, the road leading to the Roman country is closed, and you have no means of going on your way. Let us rather deceive them by agreeing to surrender you, and we shall send some of our men to accompany them. Thus we shall gain a knowledge of their mountain passes (κλείσουρας) so as to raid and destroy their country and perform what is pleasing to you.[465]

True to their promise to Leo, having handed him over, the Alans then ambushed the Abasgians and then launched a larger-scale raid through the mountain passes, taking further prisoners. Meanwhile, the Alans took Leo back with them.[466]

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[462] Theophanes, *Chronicle,* p. 391; Martin-Hisard, 'La domination byzantine', pp. 146–7: 'concrètement les Byzantins ont perdu la possibilité de nommer le *princeps* laze mais gardent sans doute le contrôle du littoral'; cf. §1.2, 5.2, 5.6, also §2.3 for al-Balādhurī's references to the 'gates' of Lazika.
[463] Mango and Scott translate ᾑχμαλώτευσαν τὴν Ἀβασγίαν literally as 'captured Abasgia', but, as they note, this cannot mean conquest without destroying the logic of the following narrative. Instead, if τὴν Ἀβασγίαν is read as a metonym for Abasgian captives, the sense of αἰχμαλωτεύω and the narrative is restored: Theophanes, *Chronicle,* p. 391; tr. Mango and Scott pp. 542, 547 n. 7.
[464] τῶν Ἀβασγῶν κύριος: on the *erist'avi* of the Abkhazians see §5.3 below.
[465] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, p. 391; tr. Mango and Scott, p. 542.
[466] Theophanes, *Chronographia,* p. 392.

The story is told from a Byzantine perspective, and refers to the obedience of the Alans to Leo the *spatharios*, and their 'love for the emperor'; but from the Alan perspective, the physical presence of Leo and his companions as their guests provided them with a powerful negotiating tool with their Abasgian neighbours. This not only enabled them to persuade the Abasgians to double the amount of money handed over to them, but also provided the Alans with an opportunity for reconnaissance, and hence for further profitable raiding. Knowledge of the passes did not simply mean familiarity with physical geography, but also awareness of who was passing through them: the Alans explained to Leo that merchants (πραγματευταὶ) moving backwards and forwards in the mountains might warn the Abasgians of their approach unless they handed Leo over openly.[467] It is not specified what the merchants were trading (apart from information), but soon they were sharing the passes with a contingent of two hundred Byzantine soldiers who had broken off from an unsuccessful Byzantine and Armenian assault on Archaeopolis (Nokalakevi) to go looting (πραιδεύοντες), and were then stranded when the approach of an Umayyad army caused the rest of the Byzantine and Armenians to flee to Phasis.[468] Justinian II informed the Abasgians they would be forgiven for their disloyalty to the empire if they gave Leo safe passage, but, the latter insisted to the Alans that he would wait for 'God to open a door', and would not leave through Abasgia.[469] The reasoning is not spelled out, but it is possible to see a coalition of interests between the Alans, who were able to keep their bargaining chip for a little longer, and Leo, who was able to maintain his independence from Justinian. Providence came in the form of the contingent of marauding Byzantine soldiers, now cut off in the mountains; Leo crossed over the mountains from the north in snow-boots or skis (μετὰ κυκλοπόδων) with a group of fifty Alans to

[467] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, p. 391.
[468] Archaeopolis had played a crucial role guarding access to the plain during the Lazikan war of 540–62 CE; the Byzantine assault in the early eighth century appears to have been motivated by a desire to defend the coastline from attack by Umayyad armies. A large hoard of *nomismata* of Maurice (r. 584–602) was discovered on the site in the 1930s: Procopius, *Wars,* viii, ch. 14; Braund, *Georiga in Antiquity,* pp. 278–9; P. Everill, I. Colvin, B. Neil and D. Lomitashvili, 'Nokalevi-Archaeopolis: Ten Years of Anglo-Georgian Collaboration', *Antiquity* 326 (2010), accessed 15 August 2016 at http://antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/everill326/.
[469] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, p. 393.

meet them the following spring. Together, they captured the fort of Sideron in Misimia (by a stratagem), held by a warden (τοποτορητὴς) called Pharasmanes who was 'subject to the Saracens and at peace with the Armenians', and thence made their way down to Apsilia and onwards across the sea to the Empire.[470]

The account of Leo's adventures in the North-West Caucasus sheds some light on the operation of the 'shadow economy' glimpsed already in the eighth-century North-East Caucasus in chapter two. There it was argued that the formal tributary relations that brought slaves from the mountains to the city of Bāb al-Abwāb from the late 730s may have represented the surface of a wider pattern of slave raiding. The passage in Theophanes may provide support for the claim that the presence of imperial armies in the region helped create the conditions for slave raiding, whether by groups of highlanders, such as the Alans, or by groups of armed men who detached themselves from the imperial armies. The presence of an imperial army could have an effect beyond the area where it was directly active. Part of the point of the story about Leo's adventures is that he was not apparently accompanied by an especially large military retinue, and he was travelling in regions where Byzantines were not normally found. However, the effects of even a limited Byzantine presence in the region could cause significant disruption for its local inhabitants.

The claim that Leo managed to achieve his objectives without ever having to hand over the money with which he had originally been sent is also significant. Prohibitions on the export of gold, silver, jewels, precious stones and silks were recurring features of Byzantine legal texts over many centuries. Sometimes the prohibitions were gendered, as in the case of the early tenth-century *Book of the Eparch* that warns that if, 'a female citizen is offering for sale goods in gold or silver, jewels or precious stones', the Eparch (Prefect) of Constantinople must be warned.[471]

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[470] Theophanes, *Chronographia,* pp. 393–5; on the fortress of Sideron, where the Missimians took refuge having killed Soterikhos, suspecting he intended to surrender the fortress of Boukhloon to the Alans: Agathias, *Histories*, iv, ch. 16; iii, ch. 15–16 (ed. Keydell, pp. 142–3, 103–5); cf. §6 (Conclusion) below.
[471] Leo VI, *Book of the Eparch*, 2.4 (ed. Koder, p. 86).

Michael Hendy takes the prohibitions seriously and makes a general case for a closed Byzantine economy, in which coinage circulation had a 'specialised and superificial nature'.[472] He makes his case on the basis of the state's domination of the production and distribution of coin, the anti-mercantile ideology dominant within the ruling class, the active reproduction of that ideology by the state, and the material impediments to widespread, complex exchange imposed by the physical geography of the empire's territorial base. In this view, coin production was always primarily connected with the state's need to facilitate its own revenue collection and expenditure, and only secondarily driven by demand for stable media of exchange within the private sector; hence, the state was always concerned with maximisation of its supply of precious metal.[473]

The dominance of the anti-mercantile ideology within the Byzantine ruling class and its active reproduction by the state evidently did not entirely preclude the participation of Byzantine elites in commercial activity that could lead to coinage and luxury items leaving the empire. Archaeological evidence, including from sites such as Moshchevaia Balka, strongly suggests such activity, as do the specificity of prohibitions in legal texts such as the *Book of the Eparch*.[474] Narrative sources may reflect imperial propaganda that deliberately obscures the leakage of valued Byzantine resources beyond the empire. Such resources could include slaves as well as coins and money. Theophanes the Confessor describes the massacre of Slavs in Asia Minor during the first reign of Justinian II following a mass defection of Slav settlers to the Umayyad commander Muḥammad b. Marwān.[475] Sigillographic evidence, however, indicates that what in

[472] M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 257–8, 664.
[473] Hendy, *Studies,* pp. 662–4.
[474] The *Book of the Eparch* refers to the privileges enjoyed by the *arkhontikoi prosōpa* (apparently a non-specific term for members of the Constantinopolitan elite comparable to the *dynatoi* of the Macedonian land legislation), and the corresponding risk that they might abuse their privileged access, wealth or influence to circumvent the official economic and sumptuary regulations: ch. 4.2, 8.2 (*arkhontikoi prosōpa*), 5.4 (*arkhōn*), 6.10 (*dynatos* or *plousios*), (ed. Koder, pp. 92, 94, 98, 104); J. Koder, 'The Authority of the *Eparchos* in the Markets of Constantinople (according to the *Book of the Eparch*)', in Armstrong (ed.), *Authority in Byznatium*, pp. 94–5.
[475] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, p. 366.

fact occurred was a large-scale slave sale conducted by the *kommerkiarios* George *apo hypaton* and lord of the *blattion*.[476] Scholars have differed in their interpretation of the *kommerkiarioi*, between those who see them essentially as civil servants (Brandes), as entrepreneurs (Oikonomidès) or as 'financial crisis managers' (Haldon and Brubaker).[477] The distinctions may in fact have been deliberately blurred, providing opportunities for private enrichment for the holders of the role, while enabling a degree of flexibility in the conduct of imperial policy.[478]

The evolution of the institution of the *kommerkiarioi* should be disentangled from the issues of silk supply, silk production and commercial activity on the frontiers of the empire. Before the sixth century, the Roman/early Byzantine Empires were importing both raw silk and woven silk textiles from Central Asia, largely through territories controlled by the Sasanian Empire. Procopius leaves two very different accounts of the development of the silk industry under Justinian I (r. 527–65). In the *Wars*, he presents the development of native sericulture as the result of monks smuggling in silk-worm eggs from Serinda (probably Khotan and Tufan) in order to satisfy Justinian's desire to break the Persian monopoly; in the *Secret History*, he accuses Justinian and the *comes sacrorum largitionum* (to whom the *comites commerciorum*, ancestors of the *kommerkiarioi* were subordinate), Peter Barsymes, of destroying the native silk industry of Beirut and Tyre by imposing a price cap and creating a state monopoly, while simultaneously enriching himself.[479]

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[476] G. Zacos and A. Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals,* 1:1 (Basel, 1972), pp. 190–1, table 33; Oikonomidès, 'Silk Trade', pp. 51–3; *contra* Hendy, *Studies*, pp. 631–4; cf. Haldon, *Seventh Century*, p. 238; Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*, pp. 69–70. On *blattion* (purple-dyed silk) see above; the dated seals of the lords of the *blattion* disappear after the fire of the imperial workshop (*ergodosia*) in 792: Oikonomidès, 'Silk Trade', pp. 50–1.

[477] W. Brandes. *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten. Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.-9. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002), pp. 239–426; Oikonomidès, 'Silk Trade', pp. 39–40; id., 'The Role of the Byzantine State in the Economy', in *EHB*, p. 985; Haldon and Brubaker, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 682–705, 715–17; Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, pp. 232–44. Zuckerman has interpreted the role as a *munus*, imposed on wealthy citizens: C. Zuckerman, 'Silk "Made in Byzantium": A Study of Economic Policies of Emperor Justinian', *TM*, 17 (2013), pp. 344–7.

[478] The careers of the *kommerkiarioi* were often closely tied to those of individual emperors: Oikonomidès, 'Role of the Byzantine State', p. 985, with examples.

[479] Procopius, *Wars*, viii, 17.1–8 (ed. Dewing, v, pp. 226–30); id., *Secret History*, 25.13–26 (ed. Dewing, pp. 296–300); 'Petrus qui et Barsymes 9', *PLRE*, iii, b, pp. 999–1002; Zuckerman, 'Silk "Made in Byzantium"', pp. 323–50.

Procopius' account in the *Wars* creates the impression that the second war in Lazica in 552 CE was connected to the desire to circumvent the Persian monopoly on the silk supply, by opening up a passage through the North-West Caucasus for the importation of silk from Central Asia.[480] Several scholars have argued that the opening up of the North Caucasian 'silk road' was both the product and a contributing cause of the wars between the Byzantine and the Persians.[481] Zuckerman, however, argues that Procopius was being disingenuous and attempting to obscure Justinian's achievement.[482] He consequently also argues that the Sogdian merchants who travelled through these passes a few years later, hoping to establish a regular Byzantine demand for their raw silk, were to be disappointed.[483] Theophanes of Byzantium reported that Justin II (r. 565–74) astonished ambassadors of the Turks by revealing that the Byzantines had acquired the secret, 'since they now controlled the *emporia* and the ports (*limena*) of Seres, which had formerly been controlled by the Persians.'[484]

However, the links Procopius and Theophanes of Byzantium (who also mentions Sarosios) make between the wars in the Caucasus and the silk supply may in fact be a fairly faithful reflection of imperial propaganda.[485] It is possible that the imperial palace simultaneously promulgated the ideas that it had captured the secret of silk production, and that military action was necessary in order to ensure further supply of silk. The former justified changes in the regulation of the silk industry, in which there were doubtless winners and losers, while the latter provided a

[480] The passage on silk production ends: 'At that time then matters stood thus between the Romans and the Persians, both as touching the war and in regard to silk (μετάξῃ)', and is shortly followed by an account of the Byzantines seizing the 'very narrow and precipitous' pass beyond Tsibilium, which led across the mountains into the Norht-West Caucasus: Procopius *Wars*, viii, 17.8 and 17.16–17 (ed. and tr. Dewing, v, pp. 230–3); for Tsibilium/Tsebel'da see §1.2 and Map I.
[481] G. Greatrex, 'Byzantium and the East in the Sixth Century', in M. Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 502–3.
[482] Zuckerman, 'Silk "Made in Byzantium"', pp. 333–40.
[483] Zuckerman, 'Silk "Made in Byzantium"', pp. 349–50; cf. §1.2 above.
[484] Theophanes of Byzantium, fr. 3 (ed. Müller, p.270) = Photios, *Bibliotheca*, 64 (ed. and tr. Henry, pp. 77–8); *Zuckerman*, 'Silk "Made in Byzantium"', p. 349.
[485] cf. §1.2 above.

justification for military expenditure that may have won some acceptance among the silk-wearing elites of Constantinople.

As Étienne de la Vaissière has argued, the discovery on the Taman peninsula of a Sogdian *ostrakon* on a travel-flask with the name of its owner Shāfnōshak and datable to the later eighth or ninth century lends support to textual evidence connecting Sogdaia (modern Sudak) in eastern Crimea with a Sogdian trading community.[486] Over 500 seals and blanks have been found there, dating between the sixth/seventh and eleventh centuries, and evidently forming part of a local archive. Among the 'commercial seals' were those of Kyriakos *apo hypaton*, the general *logothete* of the *apothēke* of Constantinople, dated to 696/7, and a series of seals of *kommerkiarioi* for the *apothēkai* of the southern Black Sea coast (for example, a seal of Anastasios, imperial *balnitor* and general *kommerkiarios* of Honorias, Paphlagonia and the Black Sea coast up to Trebizond, dated 721/2).[487]

A very significant number of the silks (225 inventory numbers at the Hermitage, the largest single group of textiles in the collection) at Moshchevaia Balka and Khasaut have been identified by Ierusalimskaia as originating from Sogdian workshops.[488] The silks in question are conventionally referred to as 'Zandanījī silks'. The name derives from a reading of an inscription on a silk found in the College Chapel of Notre Dame in Huy, Belgium.[489] Henning interpreted the inscription as seventh-century Sogdian writing, reading, 'Long 61 spans, Zandanīčī', and took 'Zandanīčī' to refer to the place of origin of the cloth, the village of Zandana, near Bukhara.[490] There are numerous

[486] De la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders*, pp. 242–9; id., 'Saint André chez les Sogdiens: aux origins de Sogdaia, en Crimée', in Zuckerman (ed.), *La Criḿee entre Byzance et le Kaghanat Khazar*, pp. 171–80; cf. §5.2 below.
[487] V.S. Shandrovskaia, 'Tamozhennaia sluzhba v Sugdee VII–X vv.', *Antichnaia drevnost' i srednie veka,* 27 (1995), pp. 119–23; E.V. Stepanova, 'Sudakskii arkhiv pechatei: predvaritel'nye vyvody', *Antichnaia drevnost' i srednie veka,* 32 (2001), pp. 97–108; id. ''New Finds from Sudak', *SBS*, 8 (2003), pp. 123–30.
[488] Iersualimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka,* p. 109; id., 'O severokavkazskom "shelkovom puti"', pp. 58–64, tables 1 and 2, p. 68.
[489] The Ram Silk at Huy: A. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving AD 400 to AD 1200* (London, 1997), M103, p. 197, plate 97a.
[490] D.G. Shepherd and W.B. Henning, 'Zandanījī Identified?', in R. Ettinghausen (ed.), *Aus der Welt der Islamischen Kunst: Festschrift für Ernest Kühnel* (Berlin, 1959), p. 39.

references to Zandanījī cloth in written sources, including al-Narshakhī's *History of Bukhara*, and while these latter sources tend to identify it with cotton, Henning and the textile specialist Dorothy Shepherd saw no reason why this should exclude the possibility that it referred to silk weaving at an earlier stage.[491] Technical and stylistic analysis of other silks originating from other reliquaries in western Europe, as well as from Aurel Stein's excavations of the Mogao caves near Dunhuang in western China, enabled Shepherd to propose an initial grouping of ten other silks which she associated with the same centre of silk weaving as the Huy ram silk ('Zandanījī I' silks).[492] Subsequent studies, including in particular investigation of the silks from the North Caucasian cemeteries, led Shepherd to suggest two further stages in the development of Sogdian silk production, represented by silks they grouped together as 'Zandanījī I' and 'Zandanījī III'.[493] While grouping the material slightly differently, Anna Muthesius accepted the association of the silks with Central Asian workshops and further argued that the materials showed not only the influence of Sasanian and Byzantine designs, but of technological adaptations by the Central Asian workshops, such as the use of a form of drawloom, in order to facilitate better imitation of the flowing drawing on the Byzantine designs.[494]

Unfortunately, two parts of this construction have recently unravelled. Close investigation of the Huy silk revealed that the inscription was in fact not written in Sogdian, as Henning had argued, but in Arabic. Geoffrey Khan provides the following reading:

لعبد الرحمن الامر بثمن
وثلثين دينرا غير ثلث

[491] Narshakhī, *The History of Bukhara*, ed. and tr. R.N. Frye (Princeton, NJ, 2007), pp. 16–17; Shepherd and Henning, 'Zandanījī Identified?', pp. 15–38.
[492] Shepherd and Henning, 'Zandanījī Identified?', pp. 19–38.
[493] D. Shepherd, 'Zandanījī Revisited', in M. Flury-Lemberg and K. Stollies (eds.), *Documenta Textilia: Festschrift für Sigrid Müller-Christensen* (Munich, 1981), pp. 105–222.
[494] Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, pp. 92–100; id., 'Byzantine Influences along the Silk Road', in id., *Studies in Silk in Byzantium* (London, 2004), pp. 277–87.

> Belonging to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, the commander, (acquired) for
> Thirty-eight dīnārs less a third.[495]

The inscription is in a cursive style first appearing in Khurāsān in the mid-eighth century, and slightly later in Egypt. Khan identified distinctive ninth-century features, such as the writing of the letter *dāl*. The gold currency appears to indicate the silk was bought by the military commander ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in a western region of the caliphate, such as Egypt or Syria. The inscription does not tell us the date or place of origin for this silk: it is in a non-calligraphic script and it is not an element of its artistic design; but radiocarbon dating of the silk places its origin significantly later than Shepherd had thought, between 780 and 980 CE with 95.4 % probability, and between 870 and 970 CE with 68.2 % probability.[496] There is no reason why this silk could not have been originally woven in Central Asia before later re-sale in the west, but it was certainly not woven there in the seventh century.[497]

There are obviously serious implications for both the chronology and provenance of the other silks grouped together under the ‘Zandanījī’ labels. The dating of the silk is a further reason for shifting the chronology of the Moshchevaia Balka cemetery to a later range than Ierusalimskaia has as yet been prepared to acknowledge. More troubling is the definitive loss of a key link between Ierusalimskaia’s ‘Sogdian’ silks and an actual centre of production in Sogdia. Without isotopic analysis of the materials themselves, much of the argumentation for provenance will remain tenuous. However, even with such evidence, location of the origin of the yarns or dyes will not resolve the problem of where the thread was woven into fabrics. One of the common technical features of the silks attributed to Central Asian workshops is their faded colour palette, when compared with silks attributed to Chinese or Byzantine workshops. Microscopic analysis

[495] N. Sims-Williams and G. Khan, ‘Zandanījī Misidentified’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s. 22 (2008), p. 210.
[496] Sims-Williams and Khan, ‘Zandanījī Misidentified’, pp. 208–11.
[497] Although doubts have been raised on stylistic grounds: B. Marshak, ‘The So-called Zandanījī Silks: Comparisons with the Art of Sogdia’, in R. Schorta (ed.), *Central Asian Textiles and Their Contexts in the Early Middle Ages* (Riggisberg, 2006), pp. 49–60.

which enabled reconstruction of the original colours of these silks indicate a palette that would once have resembled that of Chinese silks. Shepherd and others have argued that the Central Asian workshops made use of imported silk yarn and dyes from China, but lacking the mordants to fix the dyes, were unable to produce finished textiles that held their colour as persistently as the textiles produced in China.[498] These conclusions would seem to have continued validity, confirming what is already known about the exportation of large quantities of raw silk from China into Central Asia, and to offer a rationale for provisionally maintaining a Central Asian provenance for many of the textiles in question, even while underlining the need for re-evaluation of their chronology and a more scientific analysis of their provenance.

The physical presence of an individual from Central Asia or China at the Moshchevaia Balka site is indicated by a unique collection of artefacts found at the site in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, and kept in the Hermitage, sadly without corresponding documentation as to precise find context. These including several fragments of a manuscript of a Buddhist holy book (Fig. 4.09), a Buddhist icon drawn in ink with a watercolour wash on silk, showing an image of a rider in the mountains (Fig.4.10), and a document on coarse paper, with three lines of scribbled notes in Chinese (Fig, 4.11).[499] The orthography suggests an eighth century Tang dynasty provenance.[500] The text has been translated as follows:

1. 'wheat, total 6,000'
2. 'received 2000 fēng, fourth month, fourteenth day'
3. 'wheat'… 'bought meat for 4 fēng.[501]

Ierusalimskaia interprets this collection of artefacts as the personal baggage of a Chinese merchant, including his careful record-keeping of his sales and expenditures, and argues for the

[498] Shepherd, 'Zandanījī Revisited', pp. 106–7; Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 114–15.
[499] Inv. 5121: Ierusalimskaia, *Die Gräber*, pp. 127–9; Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 363–9.
[500] Tasha Vorderstrasse: personal communication.
[501] Ierusalimskaia, *Moshchevaia Balka*, p. 368.

physical presence and probable demise of the merchant at or near Moshchevaia Balka, although no corresponding burial has ever been identified on or near the site.

Ierusalimskaia and Muthesius rightly emphasise the connections between the North-West Caucasus and both Byzantium and Central Asia. What they may underestimate is the role of the economic systems of the Khazar Qaghanate and the Muslim Caliphates in shaping the situation reflected in the cemeteries of Moshchevaia Balka, Khasaut and Podorvannaia Balka.[502] The conditions of preservation in the North-West Caucasus allow us to see the preservation of textile wealth in a way that is not the case for other areas of the Khazar Qaghanate. However, written sources make it clear that very significant quantities of textiles were accumulated and redistributed by the Khazar administration. Byzantine sources, like Chinese sources, presented the desire for movable wealth on the part of nomads as evidence of their insatiable greed, while their own movable wealth was seen as essential to the functioning of the administration. However, from the perspective of nomad leaders, movable wealth also served an administrative function, and the basis of their own system of 'conspicuous redistribution'.[503] As Thomas Allsen has argued, nomadic political systems do not simply create a *pax* that facilitates trade between different regions under their hegemony: 'the process of state formation among the nomads in and of itself stimulates trade through an increased demand for precious metals, gems, and most importantly, fine cloths'.[504] Elite inhabitants of the North-West Caucasus (whether 'Alanic', 'Turkic' or 'Circassian') living under Khazar hegemony in the eighth and ninth centuries were probably provided with gifts of silk, robes and belts by the Khazars, just as they were by the Byzantines at other times. Whether these were interpreted as payment for services rendered, or

[502] In 1967, Ierusalimskaia grouped the imported silk finds in the North Caucasus, into Sogdian, Byzantine, Chinese and Iranian; in her 2012 publication, she groups the textiles into 'Fabrics of the Byzantine sphere', 'Sogdian fabrics', and 'Far-eastern (Chinese) silks' (she indicates a possible provenance from Eastern Turkestan for many of the final category): Ierusalimskaia, 'O severokavzskom "shelkovom puti"', table 2, p. 68; id., *Moshchevaia Balka*, pp. 96–119.
[503] Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*, p. 104.
[504] Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*, p. 104.

as a recognition of a more formal political relationship would have depended on the perspectives of the parties involved.

The Muslim world was almost certainly an important source of the silks found at Moshchevaia Balka, and there is no reason to assume that it was only through Constantinople that silks reached the North-West Caucasus from territories no longer controlled by the empire after the seventh century, such as Egypt or Syria.[505] Some of these could have been obtained (by raiding, trade or gift exchange) from the highlanders' neighbours in the South Caucasus, who were themselves often the recipients of prestigious gifts of silks from Muslim rulers. Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i (katholikos of Armenia, ca. 897–925) describes gifts of robes to Armenian elites, including himself, from Muslim governors, caliphs and Byzantine emperors, and, in turn, from the Armenian king Smbat to the Abkhazian king Kostanti.[506] Inhabitants of the North-West Caucasus also had direct contact with Muslim traders. As we shall see in the next chapter, al-Mas'ūdī refers to Muslim merchants 'from the lands of the Khazars, Bāb al-abwāb, and al-Lān'; he also describes how a specific type of textile produced from flax (*kattān*) by the Kashak (Circassian) neighbours of the Alans called *ṭalā* was exported to the neighbouring countries of Islam, where it could fetch a price of 10 dinars for a single length. Al-Mas'ūdī describes the maritime traffic between Trebizond and the Kashak, whose women dressed themselves in white, in *rūmī* brocades (*dībāj*), *siqlāṭ* fabric and brocades embroidered with gold.[507] The market at Trebizond provided a gateway not only to Byzantine trade, but to trade with the caliphate.[508] Meanwhile, we have seen in chapter two that the Alans also had links with the markets of the Caspian Sea region via Bāb al-Abwāb.[509] More networks of gift and commodity exchange overlapped in the North-West Caucasus than either the

[505] Cf. D. Jacoby, 'Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West', *DOP*, 58 (2004), p. 199.
[506] Yovhannes Drasxanakertc'i, *History of Armenia*, xxix, 5; xxx, 24; xxxi, 2; xxxix, 4; xl, 13–16, 22–3; xli, 6–7, 10; lv, 4–6; lx, 1–2 (tr. K. Maksoudian, pp. 128, 132, 138, 155, 198, 208); on Kostanti of Abkhazia and his relations with the Alans, see §§5.3, 5.4 below.
[507] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 45–7).
[508] Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ,* ed. de Goeje, p. 344.
[509] See §2.5 above.

official Byzantine sources or some of the modern scholarship tend to allow.

4.5 Magic: hidden sources of social power

As this thesis has argued several times before, the highlanders of the early medieval North Caucasus were simultaneously in contact with several different imperial economic and political systems (Byzantine, Caliphal and Khazar), and nonetheless able to resist full incorporation into any one of the systems. This did not necessarily make the region a space of freedom, as even indirect contact could, and did, trigger both the formation of indigenous hierarchies, and patterns of slave-raiding. Robert Harms' work on the slave and ivory trade in the Congo River Basin is extremely suggestive in this regard. Until the 1870s, no European traveller reached the Upper Congo River Basin due to the presence of thirty two impassable cataracts between Malebo Pool and the Atlantic coast.[510] Nonetheless, from the sixteenth century onwards, the society of the Upper Congo was profoundly shaped by indirect contact with Europeans and the Atlantic slave trade, as members of Bobangi fishing communities were drawn into capturing and selling other people to intermediaries for resale to Europeans. Harms charts the progression from an early fishing society before indirect contact with the slave trade to a trading society: in the former, investments in social ties (marriage, blood brotherhood) and social insurance (sharing surplus with kinsmen), which minimised risk, predominated; in the latter, capital investments (fishing, manufacture, agriculture and trade) and prestige investments (titles and ritual positions) predominated. This maximised potential individual gain, but tended towards a zero-sum game; and wherever such a zero-sum game was initiated, dark magic was suspected.[511] Cloth was used as currency in the Congo River trade, and by the nineteenth century, the cloth was largely cotton manufactured in Europe. Cloth was simultaneously a currency, a form of visible adornment for

[510] R.W. Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500–1891* (New Haven, CT, 1981), p. 1.
[511] Harms, *River of Wealth*, pp. 163–90.

the living, and a material buried in significant quantities with the dead. Harms writes that, 'It was widely believed in the nineteenth century that white people lived beneath the sea, where they wove cloth in large quantities'; rich Bobangi traders were buried with cloth, in the belief that they would come back to Europe as white people.[512]

The dilemmas for highlanders of the early medieval North-West Caucasus created by contacts with rich neighbouring societies also appear to have found expression in their burial rituals: in the lengths that they went to in order to ensure the physical preservation of the clothed bodies of the dead, the impressive quantities of imported movable wealth they buried with them, and their careful arrangement of apotropaic charms on the deceased. Contacts, especially of the kind that could produce slaves, or lead to accumulations or displays of wealth that destabilised traditional hierarchies, created dilemmas on all sides. The anti-mercantile prejudice of the Byzantine elite and the Byzantine imperial stipulations about maintaining monopolies on coinage, luxury items and specialised technologies were one expression of this dilemma; the propagation of *ḥadīth* against the wearing of silk by the *'ulamā*, was another. The Byzantine monetary economy was not a fully 'closed economy' – no economy ever is – but the pressure to control its porosity was of major ideological and economic significance. Similarly, the orthodox Muslim prejudice against silk wearing did not prevent large-scale accumulation, production and distribution of silk textiles within the caliphate, but it did stimulate the development of cotton production, and of distinctive uses of silk fabrics (in *ṭirāz* bands, and in *mulḥam* weaves). The nomadic elites of the Eurasian steppe faced analogous dilemmas, as the Orkhon inscription of the Eastern Turk Bilgä Qaghan (716–34) expressed:

> They [the Chinese] give (us) gold, silver, and silk in abundance. The words of the Chinese people have always been sweet and the materials of the Chinese people have always been soft. Deceiving by means of their sweet words and soft materials the Chinese are said to cause remote peoples to come close in this manner […] If you go those places O Turkish people you will die. If you stay in the land of the Ötükän and send caravans from

[512] Harms, *River of Wealth*, p. 210.

there you will have no trouble.[513]

As we saw in chapter two, at the other end of the Eurasian steppe, Khazar tribal leaders also had to decide whether to keep their distance from their Muslim neighbours, or accept the access to the pastures and markets south of the Caucasus Mountains offered to them. The association between currency, adornment and burial rites in the cemeteries of the North-West Caucasus express local responses to the problems of keeping-while-giving faced by their much more powerful neighbours.

[513] Cited in Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, p. 148.

CHAPTER 5

TOIL AND FROSTBITE: APPROACHES FROM BYZANTIUM

IN THE NINTH AND TENTH CENTURIES

5.1 Frozen stiff with cold

A series of letters from Nicholas I Mystikos, Patriarch of Constantinople (r. 901–7, 912–25) offer advice and encouragement to the Peter, Archbishop of Alania, who had been complaining about his hardship posting to the North Caucasus.[514] Nicholas variously compares the missionary bishop to a farmer ('they suffer who cast their seed upon the land and oft times are frozen stiff with cold; but their toil and frostbite are alleviated by their expectation of the harvesting of their fruits'), a merchant, who sails the seas in the hope of gain (κέρδος), and a military governor (στρατηγὸς), who may have to face rebellious rivals.[515] Nicholas's comparisons to farmers, merchants and *stratēgoi* is a rhetorical device, but this chapter will investigate how patterns of local agricultural development, long-distance commerce, and imperial military expansion discussed in previous chapters contributed to the emergence of new forms of aristocratic power in the mountains of the North-West Caucasus during the tenth century.

This chapter will consider the effects of Byzantine imperialism on the North-West Caucasus in the ninth and tenth centuries. The first part considers the background to the initiatives taken during the second patriarchate of Nicholas Mystikos. The first context to be considered is the response by the Patriarchate of Constantinople to Khazar hegemony in the northern and eastern Black Sea

[514] Nicholas I Mystikos, *Letters,* ed. and tr. R.J.H. Jenkins and L.G. Westerink (Washington, D.C.: 1973), Ep. 52, 118, 133–5.
[515] Nicholas, *Letters,* Ep. 135, lines 34–9, 57–60.

regions from the late eighth century. The second context is the development of new forms of aristocratic power in the South Caucasus across the course of the ninth century, and Byzantine attempts to re-establish imperial influence in the region. This is followed by a re-consideration of Nicholas's dossier of letters concerning the Alan mission. The refined chronology of the letters (summarised in table 5.1) helps to locate the Alan mission more precisely in its relationship to B in the wider Caucasus region during his first regency (913–914), and to the combined activities of Nicholas and the emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 921–44) during the first years of Romanos's reign.

The second part of the chapter turns from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, first to the imperial palace, and then to the landscape of the North-West Caucasus itself. Many of the Byzantine sources used in earlier chapters of this thesis for the North Caucasus have come to us through the collecting activities initiated by Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in the imperial palace in the mid-tenth century. The rationale governing the central collection and production of knowledge about the North Caucasus is analysed. The Byzantine sources show awareness that Alan elites had alternative models of political authority available to them, although they never explicitly mention the expulsion of the Byzantine mission that is reported to have occurred in the year 932 CE. A recent discovery of an inscription in a North Caucasian church, dated to 965 CE that names the rulers of Alania, a metropolitan bishop, an imperial envoy and the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–9), provides a terminus *ante quem* for the return of Byzantine churchmen to the region. This is analysed in the context of the changing relationship between the Byzantine Empire and the Khazar Qaghanate, and the forms of piety and patterns of military recruitment promoted by Nikephoros Phokas.

Finally, the Zelenchuk valley, site of several Middle Byzantine-style churches and a very large number of smaller chapels, provides a final case study from the landscape of the North-West Caucasus. The growth of a significant settlement at the site now known as Nizhnyi Arkhyz appears

to have depended upon the establishment of terraced agriculture in the Arkhyz basin, above the settlement. The location of the settlement has already been discussed in chapter four in connection with the textile materials from its pre-Christian cemeteries. The connections of the settlement with the wider world, persisted after its establishment as a major Christian centre; and non-Christian burial practices appear to have persisted as well. The picture from Nizhnyi Arkhyz is considered alongside the evidence from chapter three for the emergence of a new 'Alan' aristocracy in sites such as Ullandorbunla and Rim-Gora in the Kislovodsk Basin during the tenth century.

(Part I) The conversion of the Alans

5.2. The 'imperial-ecclesiastical complex' and Khazar hegemony

In the *Book of Precious Gems* by the Arab geographer Ibn Rusta, the ruler of the Alans (*malik al-Lān*) is a Christian, although the 'majority of his subjects are unbelievers, who worship idols'.[516] A version of Ibn Rusta's book was composed in 903 CE, although the material was edited several times in the course of the tenth century.[517] This does not, then, necessarily provide a *terminus ante quem* for the conversion of the Alan ruler, although it was used as such by Venance Grumel to argue Byzantine missionaries had been active in Alania before the beginning of Nicholas Mystikos's first patriarchate.[518] In any case, Nicholas Mystikos was keen to take credit for the conversion of the North Caucasian Alans to Christianity. Later, this chapter (§5.4) will argue that the letter collections of Nicholas Mystikos were organised deliberately, under the instructions of

[516] Ibn Rusta, *Kitāb al-'alāq al-nafīsa*, ed. Wüstenfeld (Leiden), p. 148.
[517] H. Göckenjan and I. Zimonyi, *Orientalische Berichte über die Völker Osteuropas und Zentralasiens im Mittelalter. Die Ğayhānī-Tradition* (Wiesbaden, 2001), pp. 34–5, 92; J.-Ch. Ducène, 'Al-Ğayhānī fragments (Extraits du *K. al-masālik wa l-mamālik* d'al-Bakrī)', *Der Islam,* 75 (1998), pp. 264, 269 n. 60, 274; I. Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century: the Magyar Chapter of the Jayhani Tradition* (Leiden, 2016), p. 32.
[518] V. Grumel, 'Notes pour l'"Oriens Christianus"', *Échos d'Orient*, 33:173 (1934), pp. 57–8; see §5.4 below.

the Patriarch himself, or by supporters shortly after his death, in order to present him the way he wished to be seen. The prominence of the Alan dossier in his materials should be viewed accordingly. Meanwhile, Constantine VII's formula for addressing the Alan ruler (*exousiokratōr*), as his 'spiritual son' (§5.5), or the inscription from the Senty Church, referring to the emperor Nikephoros II (§5.8), but not the Patriarch of Constantinople, show Byzantine emperors emphasising their importance in bringing the Alans to Christianity.

An assessment of the relative importance of imperial and ecclesiastical initiative in strengthening connections between the North-West Caucasus and Constantinople in the early tenth century entails a wider consideration of Byzantine attitudes to missionary activity, and the relationship between Church and State in Middle Byzantium. Sergei Ivanov has argued that the persistence of Mediterranean views of 'barbarians' and the subordination of the Byzantine Church to the imperial authorities hindered the development of a 'real taste for missionary effort unconnected with specific political goals'.[519] However, the career of Nicholas Mystikos illustrates the forms of integration of the 'imperial-ecclesiastical complex': a Byzantine churchman could place himself at the very summit of the imperial administration.[520] At the turn of the ninth century a group of senior Byzantine churchmen developed an approach to the ecclesiastical geography of the Black Sea region that they hoped would enable them to project their influence to outposts beyond the limits of imperial political authority. Such outposts could aid the emergence of local elites, who may or may not have seen the need to remain loyal to either patriarchs or emperors.

In the late eighth century, Khazar influence was decisive in shaping the political landscape of Byzantine outposts on both the northern and eastern shores of the Black Sea. The resources available to the imperial authorities made it impossible to maintain a military presence, but an

[519] S.A. Ivanov, 'Casting Pearls Before Circe's Swine: The Byzantine View of Mission', *TM*, 14 (2002), p. 301; S.A. Ivanov, *Vizantiiskoe missionerstvo. Mozhno li sdelat' iz 'varvara' khristianina?* (Moscow, 2003).
[520] The term 'imperial-ecclesiastical complex' is borrowed from Jonathan Shepard: see, e.g.: J. Shepard, 'Imperial Constantinople: Relics, Palaiologan Emperors, and the Resilience of the Exemplary Centre', in J. Harris and C. Holmes (eds.), *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 61–92.

ecclesiastical hierarchy was sustained. Our sources for the response of senior Byzantine churchmen to this situation are, inevitably, shaped by the polemics of the Iconoclast controversy. They also, though, reveal a distinctive strategy for not only maintaining, but extending the influence of the Patriarchal Church in territories now dominated by the Khazars. The churchmen in question were the Patriarch Tarasios (r. 784–806) and his close associates, such as Stephen the Deacon, who composed a *Life* of the iconophile saint Stephen the Younger (d. 764) shortly after Tarasios's death, in 807 or 809.[521] Tarasios himself came from a powerful Constantinopolitan family and had held high-ranking lay positions in the imperial chancery, probably under the iconoclast Constantine V (r. 741–75) before his election as Patriarch under Eirene (regent 780–90, r. 797–802).[522]

According to the *Life of Stephen the Younger*, the iconophile saint had advised monks to flee to those places 'under the power (ἐξουσία) of the dragon' but free from his iconoclast 'heresy', namely: the far side of the Black Sea; southern Italy and Illyria; Pamphylia and Isauria; Cyprus; Palestine and Syria.[523] Marie-France Auzépy argues Stephen the Deacon's purpose in writing this passage was to assert the orthodoxy of monks who came or returned from the regions in question to Constantinople after 787.[524] At the same time, the implication that Constantinople had ἐξουσία over these territories, including sees detached from the papacy, even if the emperor had been unable to enforce iconoclasm there, was making a claim by extension for the church of its Patriarch.[525] Stephen the Deacon describes the places of iconophile exile in the northern Black Sea regions as following the coast of the eparchy of Zikhia, from Cherson, Bosporos and Nikopsis,

[521] Stephen the Deacon, *Life of Stephen the Younger*, ed. and French tr. M.-F. Auzépy (Birmingham, 1997); Stephen had access to the patriarchal archives, makes extensive use of the Acts of the Council of Nicaea II and may have been present: M.-F. Auzépy, *L'Hagiographie et l'iconoclasme byzantine: le cas de la Vie d'Étienne le Jeune* (Birmigham, 1999), pp. 103–20; Lamberz (ed.), *Acta,* III/1, p. 234, lines 5–6.
[522] Introduction to Ignatios the Deacon, *Life of the Patriarch Tarasios*, ed. and tr. S. Efthymiadis (Birmigham, 1998), pp. 6–13.
[523] *Life of Stephen the Younger,* ed. Auzépy, p.125.
[524] Auzépy, *L'Hagiographie*, pp. 272–284.
[525] C. Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy in the *Notitiae episcopatuum*', in id. (ed.), *La Crimée entre Byzance et le Khaganat Khazar* (Paris, 2006), pp. 211–14.

as well as the regions in the direction of the 'Vale of Gothia' (Γότθιο[ς] Κοίλη).[526] The term κοίλη is ambiguous, but may convey the sense of mountain passes (κλεισοῦραι) leading to the steppes behind.[527] This cannot be taken as evidence that the Crimea or the north-eastern Black Sea coast had actually been iconophile strongholds, but it allowed the clerics of Hagia Sophia to make a claim similar to that advanced for the other territories beyond the effective control of the imperial administration.[528]

The northern and eastern Black Sea regions are presented by Stephen in terms of a division between the coastal cities, and the mountain ranges and then the steppes beyond in both the Crimean peninsula and the north Caucasus, with a meeting point at the Kerch straits (Map VI). This compares with the ecclesiastical geography of the region in the list of bishops edited by Darrouzès as the third of the *Notitiae Episcopatuum*.[529] Constantine Zuckerman has persuasively argued that the latter should be dated to the last years of Tarasios's patriarchate, rather than the later ninth century, as traditionally thought.[530] The connections with the *Life of Stephen the Younger* support Zuckerman's thesis. In *Notitia* 3, the autocephalous archbishops of Cherson and Bosporos (along with a new bishop of Sougdaia) are assigned to the eparchy of Zikhia, Nikopsis is attached to the eparchy of Abasgia (having formerly belonged to Zikhia), while Gothia appears for the first time as a large metropolitan see, with its metropolis at Doros (modern Mangup) and seven suffragan bishops.[531] With the exception of the suffragan bishop of Tamatarkha, who faces

[526] *Life of Stephen the Younger*, ed. Auzépy, p. 125; for τὴν Γότθιον Κοίλην, Auzépy gives: 'la Gothie Creuse': id., p. 219.
[527] cf.: S. Albrecht, 'Die Krim der Byzantiner', in S. Albrecht, F. Daim and M. Herdick (eds.), *Die Höhensiedlungen im Bergland der Krim* (Mainz, 2013), p. 115 n. 98.
[528] *contra*: A.A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), pp. 88–9; nor is it necessarily the case that Gothia had rival iconophile and iconoclast bishops in 787, *contra*: M.-F. Auzépy, 'Gothie et Crimée de 750 à 830 dans les sources ecclésiastiques et monastiques grecques', *MAIET*, 7 (2000), p. 330:.
[529] *Notitiae episcopatuum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Paris, 1981), No. 3.
[530] Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', pp. 202–14, which reverses the traditional chronology of *Notitia* 2 and 3: Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae*, pp. 18–19, 32–3.
[531] Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae*, 3, lines 82–4, 89, 42, 611–18, 777–9. Theodore of Stoudios mentions an (iconoclast) bishop of Cherson ca. 816 CE and writes to an archimandrite of Gothia (implying the existence of multiple monasteries) ca. 821–6 CE: Theodore of Stoudios, *Letters,* ed. G. Fatouros, *CFHB* 31 (Berlin, 1992), Eps. 112, 486 (the latter makes a point of criticising slave-ownership among monks). On Sougdaia (Sudak) as a commercial outpost: see §4.4 above (and Map VI). The location of Nikopsis is disputed: Auzépy

the autocephalous bishop of Bosporos across the Kerch straits, all of the suffragan bishops of Gothia are attached to ethnonyms and toponyms from the mountains and steppes controlled directly by the Khazars: the Khoztirs, Astil, Khwalis, the Onogurs, Reteg (*Terek?) and the Huns.[532] Notes appended to the *Notitia* specified that 'the [see] of the Khotzirs is close to Phoulai and *Qara-Su, which means "Black Water"', while 'Astil is the river of Khazaria, and also a fortress'.[533] In this vision, the Khazar-dominated Black Sea coastal cities of the Black Sea provide the link with the Church of Constantinople for a network of bishops extending to the Volga delta, the central North Caucasus and the Caspian coast of Dagestan.

The background to this ecclesiastical project can be seen in the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787). The Acts contain several lists of bishops, re-edited and analysed by Erich Lamberz, and re-interpreted by Constantin Zuckerman.[534] In Lists A, C and F, Gothia is represented by the

identifies it with Anakopia/Novyi Afon (modern Abkhazia – see Map I), but it should probably be located to the north of Tuapse (Krasnodarskii krai), at the mouth of the river Nechepsukho, where a settlement known as 'MTS' has been found with large quantities of imported ceramics of the fifth and sixth centuries, as well as traces of stone masonry and marble capitals. The settlement was still functioning in the eighth and ninth centuries: Auzépy, *L'Hagiographie*, pp. 272–4; A.Iu. Vinogradov, 'Zihkhia', *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 20 (Moscow, 2009), p. 191; A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos* (2 vols., Washington, D.C., 1985), i, p. 346; Makarova and Pletneva (eds.), *Krym*, pp. 60, 62, 64, 195.

[532] Khotzirs (ὁ Χοτζίρων: *Notitia* 3, lines 612, 778) does not need to be limited to the Khazars in the Crimean steppes, *contra*: Zuckerman 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', pp. 224–6**;** Itil (ὁ Ἀστήλ: *Not.Ep* 3, lines 613, 779), was the Khazar capital at the mouth of the Volga, and a name for the river: Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 224–9; early Rus' sources refer to the Caspian Sea (ὁ Χουάλης: *Notitia* 3, line 614) as 'Khvalis': 'Ис того же лѣса потечеть Вълга на въстокъ, и вътечеть седмьюсесятъ жерелъ в море Хвалисьское' ('From the same forest the Volga flows to the east, and seventy tributaries flow into the Khvalis sea'): *Povest' vremmenykh let,* ed. D. Ostrowski (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), p.32; the Onoghurs (ὁ Ὀνογούρων) are attested in Syriac and Greek sources from the sixth century; in the eighth to tenth centuries Byzantine sources link them with the Bulgars of the North Caucasian steppes: P.B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples. Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 100–4; ὁ 'Ρετέγ (*Notitia* 3, line 617) was reconstructed by Vasiliev as *ὁ Τερέγ, which he suggested could refer either to the river Terek or the city of Tarku (see Maps I, III) on the western shore of the Caspian: Vasiliev, *Goths of the Crimea,* p. 100; the 'Huns' (ὁ Οὔνων: *Notitia* 3, line 617) may refer to the Huns of Dagestan: Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 259–61; id., *Introduction*, pp. 106–8.

[533] ὁ Χοτζίρων σύνεγγυς Φούλων καὶ τοῦ Χαρασίου, ἐνῶ λέγεται τὸ Μάβρον Νερόν. ὁ Ἀστήλ, ἐνῶ λέγεται ὁ Ἀστὴλ ὁ ποταμὸς τῆς Χαζαρίας, ἔστιν δὲ κάστρον: *Notitia* 3, lines 778–9. John of Gothia was initially imprisoned by the Khazars at Phoula, before his escape across the Black Sea to Amastris: *Life of John of Gothia,* ch. 8 (ed. M.-F. Auzépy, p. 84). The accurate translation of the Turkic *Qara-Su indicates the quality of the information possessed by the compilers of *Notitia* 3. The Büyük (Large) Qarasuv (Ukr. Karasivka) is the Crimean Tatar name for the main right tributary of the Salgir River, which flows from the mountains of eastern Crimea into the Sea of Azov.

[534] E. Lamberz (ed.), *Die Bischofslisten des VII. Ökumenischen Konzils (Nicaeanum II)* (Munich, 2004); Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', pp. 202–14.

monk Cyril, attending on behalf of the archbishop Niketas. In List D, however, Cyril appears as a representative of the archbishop John instead.[535] The *Life of John of Gothia* presents John as an iconodule bishop, who had travelled to Iberia (almost certainly, Mts'khet'a) for consecration rather than to iconoclast Constantinople, apparently around 758 CE, having previously spent three years in Jerusalem.[536] John visited Constantinople many years later, at some point in the years 780–4, in the reign of Eirene and her young son Constantine VI (r. 780–97), but while Paul IV was still Patriarch (r. 780–4); the *Life* implies John was instrumental in Paul's deathbed conversion to icon-veneration, leading to the appointment of Tarasios and the Council of 787.[537]

The *Life* then relates how John was delivered over to the Khazars by his own people following the failure of a revolt.[538] Marie-France Auzépy argues that Cyril the monk was representing rival bishops (John the anti-Khazar iconodule and Niketas the pragmatist); however, it is more likely that the current form of List D reflects a later revision, and that Niketas was the only archbishop of Gothia at the time of Nicaea.[539] The account of John's betrayal follows that of the Council of Nicaea in the *Life,* but the text also supports a reading that places the end of the revolt immediately on John's return from Constantinople, ca. 780–4.[540] According to Zuckerman's reconstruction, John's visit to Constantinople had been in the hope of winning military support for the revolt; when he returned empty-handed, he was surrendered to the Khazars, and Niketas

[535] Lamberz (ed), *Bischofslisten,* p. 45 and n. 174; A:26; B: 29; C:35; D:39; E: 42; F:35.
[536] *Life of John of Gothia,* ch. 2 (ed. Auzépy, p. 78). The Church of Mts'khet'a originally belonged to the Patriarchate of Antioch, but became autocephalous around the mid-eighth century; ties were at least as strong with the monasteries and Patriarchate of Jerusalem: cf. *DAI,* ch. 45, lines 29–33; ch. 46, lines 54–5; B. Martin-Hisard, 'Christianisme et Église dans le monde géorgien', in Dagron *et al.* (eds.), *Histoire du Christianisme*, iv, pp. 577–8; the tenth-century *Life of Grigol of Khandzt'a* is dated by the incumbent Patriarch of Jerusalem and Katholikos of Mts'khet'a, without reference to Antioch: see §§5.3, 5.9 below on Georgian monasticism.
[537] *Life of John of Gothia*, ch. 3 (ed. Auzépy, p. 80).
[538] *Life of John of Gothia,* ch. 4 (ed. Auzépy, p. 80).
[539] Auzépy, 'Gothie et Crimée', pp. 327–31; Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', pp. 215–18.
[540] After John had spoken of icon-veneration to Paul, he 'returned at once'; the narrative then describes Paul's death and the Council; and the new chapter then begins: 'This sainted bishop John after this (μετὰ ταῦτα) was handed over…': μετὰ ταῦτα may refer back to John's return, rather than to the restoration of icons, which he did not witness, but in this version, helped bring about: *Life of John Gothia*, ch. 3–4 (ed. Auzépy, p. 80).

was promoted as a more amenable figure.[541] The deposition of John and the acceptance of Niketas as John's replacement reflected recognition of Khazar hegemony by both the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchy in late eighth century Constantinople.

Zuckerman's argument can be taken a step further with respect to the western Caucasus. The eleventh-century *Matiane K'art'lisa* (part of the Georgian chronicle collection, the *K'art'lis Ts'khovreba*) reports:

> When the Greeks grew feeble, the *erist'avi* of the Ap'khaz by the name of Leon, nephew of Leon the *erist'avi* to whom Ap'khazet'i had been given as inheritance, rebelled against them. This second Leon was the offspring of the daughter of the king of the Khazars. With their support he rebelled against the Greeks, seized Ap'khazet'i and Egrisi as far as Likhi, and took the title of king (*mep'e*) of the Ap 'khaz.[542]

In this version, Leon annexed the coastal region of Lazica (Egrisi) west of the Likhi (Surami) Mountain range during his rebellion. However, the Georgian *Passion of St. Abo of Tiflis*, written by Ioane Sabanis-dze shortly after Abo's execution in Tiflis in 786 CE, creates a different impression.[543] Ioane described how an Arab convert to Christianity, Abo the perfumer from Baghdad, accompanied Nerses, the *erist'avi* of K'art'li, in his flight from the Muslim authorities through the Alan Gates into Khazaria in around 779–80. Abo received baptism in Khazaria ('there are many towns and villages in that northern land which by the grace of the Holy Ghost abide securely in the Christian faith'), and some time elapsed before Abo and Nerses were given safe

[541] Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', pp. 217–18.
[542] *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p. 258. The first ruler to be given regnal years (45 years) in the *Divan of Abkhazian Kings* is called Leon; only the one Leon is mentioned by the *Divan* for this period, but here *Matiane K'art'lisa* makes clear that the first king succeeded his uncle of the same name as *erist'avi* of Ap'khazet'i: on the *Divan,* see §5.4 below. Simon Janashia suggested the Georgian syntax of the first sentence can instead be read as meaning that the younger Leon received Ap'khazet'i as an inheritance from his uncle: S. Janashia, 'O vremeni i usloviiakh vozniknoveniia abkhazskogo tsarstva', in *Shromebi,* vol. 2 (Tbilisi, 1952), p. 326. The translation of the Georgian word (*daipqra*) rendered here as 'seized' is also controversial, as the question of whether the annexation of Egrisi occurred peacefully or by force of arms hinges on it: Z.V. Anchabadze, *Iz istorii srednevekovoi Abkhazii (VI–XVII vv.)* (Sukhumi, 1959), pp. 99–100; Hewitt, *Discordant Neighbours*, p. 20 n. 18.
[543] *Passion of St. Abo of Tiflis*, tr. D.M. Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints* (London, 1956), pp. 116–34; German tr. K. Schulze, 'Das Marytrium des Heiligen Abo von Tiflis', in O. von Gebhardt and A. Harnack (eds.), *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, vol. 28 (Leipzig, 1905).

passage to Ap'khazet'i.[544] There they were met by the *mt'avari* of Ap'khazet'i (Leon), who, with his bishops and priests, blessed the convert. Ioane Sabanis-dze emphasised the piety of Ap'khazet'i and then provided the following geographical information:

> The frontiers of their land are formed by the Pontic Sea, which is a special domain of the Christian faith, right up to the Chaldian borders. Trebizond is situated there, and so is Ap'sarea and the port of Nap'sa. And these towns and places are under the sway of the servant of God, the emperor of the Ionians, whose residence is in the great city of Constantinople.[545]

Simon Janashia read this passage as meaning that Leon, as *mt'avari* of Ap'khazet'i claimed authority over the Black Sea coast as far south as the borders of Chaldia.[546] The border of Ap'khazet'i and Chaldia, and hence the limit of direct Byzantine control, appears to be placed on the Akampsis (Çoruh) river, at the mouth of which lay the fortress of Apsaros, although Byzantine claims to ultimate authority over the whole region still appear to be acknowledged at this point.[547] Janashia drew attention to Leon's title: *mt'avari* conveys the sense of a hereditary ruler ('prince'), rather than *erist'avi*, which conveys the sense of an appointed official or military leader

[544] *Passion of St. Abo of Tiflis*, tr. Lang, p. 119. On the report of large numbers of Christian towns in Khazaria at this time: P. Peeters, 'Les Khazares dans la Passion de S. Abo de Tiflis', *AB*, 52 (1934), pp. 21–56; M. van Esbroeck, 'Le substrat hagiographique de la mission de Constantin-Cyrille', *AB*, 104 (1986), pp. 337–48.
[545] *Passion of St. Abo of Tiflis*, tr. Lang, p. 119; Schulze, p. 24; Russian tr.: Anchabadze, *Iz istorii*, p. 112: Lang gives 'Nicopsia' for Nap'sa; Schulze gives 'Napse'. The identification of Nap'sa with Nikopsis, in Zikhia, makes little sense in this context. The harbour appears to be located in Chaldia: Vinogradov and Gugushvili link it with the port of Hyssos/Sousourmena (mod. Sürmene): A.Iu. Vinogradov and Sh. Gugushvili, *Abkhazskii katolikosat. Ego vozniknovenie i ranniaia istoriia (VIII-X vv.)* (Moscow, 2013), p. 20 n. 93.
[546] Janashia, 'O vremeni', p. 338.
[547] *DAI*, ch. 46, lines 117–19 indicates that Akampsis was a Byzantine border county (*tourma*) in 923; Apsaros fort: Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments,* i, pp. 346, 350–1: their identification, following Honigman, of Apsaros with the stronghold of Anakouphia surrendered to Romanos III Argyros by Aldē, the Alan widow of the Georgian king Giorgi (1014–27), in 1034, should probably be rejected. A lead seal, recently found in Bulgaria, gives decisive evidence for the existence of a Byzantine Thema in the region of Anakopia (modern Nofyi Afon) and Soteroupolis (Pityous/Pitsunda) in the mid-eleventh century: the inscription on both sides reads: Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) Νικολάῳ (πρωτο)σπαθ(αρίῳ) ἐπὶ τοῦ χρ(υσο)(τρι)κλ(ί)ν(ου) |(καὶ) στρατηγ(ῷ) Σ(ωτηρ)ουπόλ(εως) (καὶ) Ἀν(α)κουπί(ας): W. Seibt, 'The Byzantine Thema of Soteroupolis-Anakopia in the 11th Century', *Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences,* 6:2 (2012), pp. 174–8; W. Seibt and I. Jordanov, 'Στρατηγὸς ο0Σωτηρουπόλεως καὶ Ἀνακουπίας. Ein mittelbyzantinisches Kommando in Abchazien (11. Jahrhundert), *SBS*, 9 (2006), pp. 231–9; J.-C. Cheynet also identifies Anakouphia with Anakopia, which 'controlled access to Alania': in Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, p. 389, tr. Flusin (Paris, 2003), p. 322 n. 76; E. Honigman, *Die Ostgrenze des Byzantinischen Reiches von 363 bis 1071* (Brussels, 1935), p. 166 n. 7; on the identification of Soteroupolis, see §5.4 below.

('duke'), without yet making the claim to independence implied by *mep'e* ('king').[548] Janashia suggested the latter title may not have been adopted until after Eirene blinded her son Constantine VI in 797.[549]

In any case, it appears that already by 787, Leon, almost certainly with Khazar backing, had established *de facto* control of a significant stretch of the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus. The circumstances within the Empire at the time gave Eirene and her government little choice but to accept this as a *fait accompli*. At Nicaea, Tarasios made adjustments in ecclesiastical structure in the region to reflect the new situation. While the titular see of Christopher, metropolitan of Lazica, was moved from Phasis to Trebizond by the seventh sitting, a new autocephalous bishop of Sebastopolis, Constantine, was added to List F.[550] Constantine's see should probably be located at Sukhum, in modern Abkhazia (Map I).[551] It might be possible to identify Christopher and Constantine respectively as opponent and supporter of Leon's new, Khazar-backed, regime in the western Caucasus, analogous to John and Niketas of Gothia. Christopher may have come to Nicaea already as an exile based in Trebizond, even while still claiming authority in Egrisi, while

[548] Janashia, 'O vremeni', pp. 336–7.

[549] Janashia, 'O vremeni', pp. 331–3, 340–1, where he suggests Leon's kinship (via the family of the Khazar Qaghan) with Constantine VI may have supplied a personal motive for his revolt. Theophanes's account of the blinding of Constantine suggests a parallel with the attempted blinding of Pope Leo III, which he presents as a cause of Charlemagne's coronation as emperor: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, pp. 471–2. Michel van Esbroeck compares the proclamation of the Abkhazian *mep'e* and the western *imperator* during Eirene's sole reign: M. van Esbroeck, 'Lazique, Mingréli, Svanéthie et Apkhazie du IVe au IXe siècle', in *Il Caucaso,* i, p. 217.

[550]Constantine appears first as a priest, representing Sebastopolis, then as its bishop in his own right: Lamberz (ed.), *Bischofslisten,* p.49: D:66 (Κωνσταντῖνος πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ θρόνου Σεβαστουπόλεως); E:65 (Κώνστα (*sic*) πρεσβυτέρου καὶ τοποτηρητοῦ Σεβαστουπόλεως); F:64 (Κώνστας ἀνάξιος ἐπίσκοπος Σεβαστουπόλεως).

[551] Lamberz (ed.), *Bischofslisten,* p. 49 n. 191; Zuckerman rejects Lamberz's identification of Sebastopolis with Abasgia, in favour of Armenia II (cf. *PBE* #Konstantinos 60; *PmbZ* #3865), but the close relationship between List E and *Notitia* 3, which he himself demonstrates, indicates that the *sekreton* of the Patriarchate of Constantinople identified Sebastopolis with Abasgia at this time: Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', p. 228 n. 82; Darrouzès (ed), *Notitiae*, 3, line 94; Vinogradov and Gugushvili, *Abkhazskii katolikosat,* p. 24 see a contradiction between the presence of an archbishop of Sebastopolis and the removal of the metropolitan of Phasis to Trebizond in the context of Leon's push for independence, but this is resolved if Constantine and Christopher are seen as representing alternative parties within the region's local ecclesiastical politics. For Sukhum, see: Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, i, pp. 58, 325, 335, 345, 347.

Constantine may have received his promotion over the course of the Council.[552] When Tarasios and those in the patriarchal chancellery came to review the outcome of Nicaea II, through the drawing up of *Notitia* 3, they maintained their pragmatic attitude to Khazar hegemony, but contemplated how this might be turned to the advantage of the patriarchate by projecting its ecclesiastical authority as far as the Volga delta. They also devised an alternative response to the increased power of the rulers of Abkhazia: they restored the eparchy of Lazika with its metropolis at Phasis and suffragan bishops (at least on paper), and recognised the new authority of the Abkhazian kings by attaching Nikopsis to Abasgia (along with Sebastopolis).[553]

An early ninth-century source, ostensibly providing eye-witness accounts of Christian communities along the eastern and northern Black Sea coasts, which may provide some evidence for the realities on the ground is the *Life of the Apostle Andrew* by Epiphanios, monk of Kallistratou monastery in Constantinople.[554] The narrative of the apostle's travel to the region, accompanied by his disciple Simon the Canaanite, is interpolated with Epiphanios's account of his own travels. Andrei Vinogradov dates the first redaction of this text, and Epiphanios's travels, to ca. 815–20, while a second redaction was made ca. 820–43.[555] Flight from iconoclast persecution provided the pretext for Epiphanios's journey. Epiphanios adapts a long tradition of texts on the travels of the apostles, via Pseudo-Epiphanios of Cyprus, such that, in his version, 'the blessed apostle Andrew taught the Scythians and Sogdians and Sarmatians in Sebastopolis the Great, where are found the camp of Apsaros, the port of the Zikhs and the river Phasis, in the land of the

[552] *PBE* (#Konstantinos 60) rejects the possibility that Constantine was promoted over the course of the seventh session, on 13 October 787. However, since List E is a later compilation, based on a prototype of D, the promotion could have occurred at any point between 1 October (4th session, List D) and 13 October: cf. Niketas, representative of Halicarnassus, promoted to become its bishop elect in the same days: Lamberz. *Bischofslisten*, pp. 27 n. 86, 49 n. 191, 69 and n. 320.
[553] Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae*, 3, lines 39, 576–81, 589, 594; Trebizond appears in its usual position as a suffragan bishop beneath Neokaisareia (Pontos Polemoniakos): 3, line 346.
[554] Epiphanios the Monk, *Life of the Apostle Andrew,* ed. and Russian tr. A.Iu. Vingradov, *Grecheskie predaniia o Sv. Apostole Andree,* vol. 1: *Zhitiia* (St. Petersburg, 2005); cf. C. Mango, 'A Journey Round the Coast of the Black Sea in the Ninth Century', *Palaeoslavica,* 10:1 (2002), pp. 255–64.
[555] Vinogradov, *Grecheskie predaniia*, i, pp. 39–44.

Iberians and Sousoi and Phoustoi and the Alans'.[556] According to Epiphanios, Andrew and his disciples Simon the Canaanite and Matthew travelled to Iberia, the Phasis River, and into Svaneti (Σουσανία). Missionary work there was easy, 'since the men of that tribe are ruled over by women, and women are by nature easily persuaded'.[557] They then travelled to the fortress of Kheimarris, site of Maximos the Confessor's exile, where Matthew remained, while Simon and Andrew continued on into Alania and the city of Phousta.[558] There they 'worked many miracles and converted many' before entering Abasgia, where Andrew left Simon and his disciples at Sebastopolis the Great. Andrew travelled north along the coast into Zikhia, where, according to Epiphanios, the people are fierce and barbarous, and remain non-believers to this day. By contrast, the people of Sougdaia were easy to convert.[559] Andrew then travelled to Bosporos: following in his footsteps, Epiphanios met the polyglot bishop Kolymbadios, and George, the bishop-elect. Epiphanios found there icons not made by human hands, and a relic-container with an inscription of Simon the Canaanite; he also found a tomb containing relics in Nikopsis in Zikhia, with an inscription of Simon the Canaanite.[560]

The issues of ecclesiastical hierarchy and political hegemony are here left to one side.[561] There is no reference to the Khazars or the Abkhazian kings in Epiphanios' description of his travels. However, the *realia* described complement the picture obtained from the chancellery of Tarasios in significant ways. The ten languages allegedly spoken by the bishop of Bosporos indicates he

[556] Epiphanios, *Life of Andrew,* ch. 9, pp. 117, 159.
[557] Epiphanios, *Life of Andrew,* ch. 32, pp. 144, 177.
[558] Epiphanios, *Life of Andrew,* ch. 32, pp. 144–5, 177; on Skhimar/Kheimarris/Khumara (Χείμαρριν κάστρον), see §4.3 above and §5.6 below; Vinogradov has argued Phousta should be located at Pal in the middle Kodor valley, i.e. south of the passes into the North Caucasus, rather than at, e.g. Rim Gora in the Kislovodsk Basin (see §3.5 above): A.lu. Vinogradov, 'K lokalizatsii vizantiiskikh krepostei v Apsilii', in Korobov (ed.), *E.I. Krupnov i razvitie,* p. 227. This would that imply an Alan presence south of the mountains (perhaps seasonal?) was envisaged by Epiphanios the monk in the early ninth century.
[559] Epiphanios, *Life of Andrew,* ch. 32, pp. 145, 177–8; on Sogdian colonists in the Taman peninsula and the Crimea in the early ninth century see §4.4 above.
[560] Epiphanios, *Life of Andrew,* ch. 33, pp. 145, 178.
[561] Traditions concerning the Apostle Andrew would later be used to bolster the claims of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but this does not appear to have been a major motivation for Epiphanios, still less for the anti-Photian Niketas the Paphlagonian, who used this text: F. Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 234.

was perceived as serving a polyethnic community (the many different subjects of the Khazars), and not simply Greek speakers. The account of the conversion of the people of Sougdaia appears significant in the light of the unprecedented references to a bishop of Sougdaia at Nicaea II and in *Notitia* 3. The developing cult of Simon the Canaanite would help the Abkhazian kings to project their Christianity back into a past long before the Justinianic conversion of the sixth century.[562] This would be important both for the definition of their relationship to the Byzantine Empire, and to their Bagrationi rivals.[563] Most intriguing of all is the presentation of Andrew and his disciples following a route marked by the former Byzantine fortresses of Apsilia towards the Alans, who could apparently be found as far south as the middle Kodor, on the former border of Apsilia and Misimiania.[564] This route, which we saw in the previous chapter was a conduit of commercial exchange between the Alans (and their Khazar hegemons) and the Byzantines, is here presented by a ninth-century Byzantine monk as a possible conduit of missionary activity.

5.3. The Christian aristocracies of the South Caucasus

In the century after Tarasios and his associates had set out their conception of the relationship between imperial power, the patriarchate of Constantinople and monasticism, a great deal changed in the church and the wider world. Patriarchs and monastic leaders emerged from the

[562] Martin-Hisard, 'Christianisme', p. 554 n. 22; Ivane Javakhishvili argued that the Andrew legend was not known in Georgia before the tenth century, and entered via contact with Byzantium: I. Javakhishvili, 'Propovedcheskaia deiatel'nost' ap. Andreia i sv. Niny v Gruzii', *ZhMNP*, 333 (1901), p. 106; cf. the following passage in the *Life of Kings*, in the *K'art'lis Ts'khovreba*: '…Andrew and Simon the Canaanite from among the twelve apostles came to Ap'khazet'i and Egrisi. And there St. Simon the Canaanite was martyred in the city of Nikop'si, on the Greek border. But Andrew converted the Megrelians, and went on further on the road of Klarjet'i': Thomson, *Rewriting,* pp. 50–1: Rapp suggests this is Leonti Mroveli's eleventh century interpolation in his source (ca. 800): Rapp Jr., *Studies*, p. 167. This could reflect the situation after Abkhazian and Georgian monarchies had been united in 1008, annexing the Byzantine/Abkhazian tradition to culminate in Andrew's conversion of the Bagrationi heartlands.

[563] For the development of traditions about the conversion of K'art'li by Nino, and comparison with Gregory the Illuminator and Armenia, see: Thomson, *Rewriting,* pp. xxi–xxii. These drew on seventh-century materials, reshaped in the monasteries of Tao-Klarjet'i, possibly by a contemporary of Giorgi Merchul'e in the ninth century: D. Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia. A History,* 3rd edn. (London, 2010), p. 62; Rapp, *Studies*, pp. 56–7, 165.

[564] Vinogradov,'K lokalizatsii', pp. 226–8.

end of second iconoclasm with significantly enhanced moral and political authority, with often violently opposed ideas on how to exercise that authority with respect to the secular authorities. By the late ninth century, the waning power of the Khazars in the North Caucasus and the Crimea, and of the 'Abbāsid caliphate in the South Caucasus, was leading Byzantine imperial elites to look for new political and economic opportunities in the region. At the same time, local elites were attempting to assert their independent authority. The establishment of new royal titles in the Caucasus was one aspect of this; patronage of the different saints' cults, churches and monastic movements of the Caucasus was another.

From the early ninth century, the Georgian Bagrationi family began to establish their influence in the western Caucasus from territories in Tao and Klarjet'i in the Byzantine and Armenian borderlands. Later historical writing under Bagrationi patronage tended to back-project the importance of this family, its Orthodox Chalcedonian Christianity and its close relations with the Byzantine Empire, and understated their close cooperation with their Muslim neighbours.[565] Nonetheless, Bagrationi patronage of a new movement of monastic colonisation clearly did play an important part in their later rise to prominence. The *Life of Grigol of Khandzt'a*, written by the monk Giorgi Merch'ule of the monastery of Khandzt'a in Klarjet'i in 950/1, describes how the monk Grigol (759–861) and his followers had established a series of monasteries in Klarjet'i.[566] According to the *Life,* two of Grigol's ambitious disciples, Tevdore and Kristepore, provided king (*mep'e*) Demetre I of Abkhazia with an opportunity to benefit from the same process.[567] Since

[565] N. Evans, 'Kastron, Rabaḍ and Arḍūn: the Case of Artanuji', in N. Matheou, Th. Kampaniaki and L. Bondioli (eds.), *From Constantinople to the Frontier. The City and the Cities* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 345–64.
[566] Giorgi Merch'ule, *Life of Grigol of Khandzt'a*, French tr. B. Martin-Hisard, 'Moines et monastères géorgiens du 9e siècle: la Vie de saint Grigol de Xancta', *REB*, 59 (2001), pp.22–91. In ch. 83, Giorgi writes that with the aid of his abbot Tevdore, and the latter's brother Iovane, the *Life* was completed while Agathon was Patriarch of Jerusalem, Mikel was the Katholikos of Mts'khet'a, Ashot [II] son of Adarnase *mep'e* was *kouropalatēs* (d. 954), and Giorgi [II], son of Kostanti [I] was *mep'e* of the Ap'khazians, Sumbat was *erist'avi* of *erist'avi*s (d. 958), Adarnase son of Bagrat was *magistros* (d. 961) and Sumbat son Davit' *mamp'ali* was *erist'avi* (d. 981). In §70 Bagrat, the *erist'avi* of *erist'avi*s (d. 966) claims to have redacted the text. This is therefore a text not only commissioned, but actively revised by members of the Bagrationi family.
[567] *Life of Grigol*, ch. pp. 12–14.

Grigol would not allow Tevdore and Kristepore to establish their own monasteries in Klarjet'i, they travelled secretly to the Abkhaz king with four other monks. The pro-Bagrationi *Life* then relates how Demetre begrudgingly returned Tevdore and Kristepore to Grigol, in return for which Grigol equally reluctantly established a monastery for him, leaving Ilarion, who had arrived from Jerusalem with some good books, as its abbot.[568]

Giorgi Merch'ule implies that the new monastery established for Demetre of Abkhazia in Imereti in the mid-ninth century was Georgian-speaking, and possibly under the jurisdiction of the katholikos of Mts'khet'a: the *Life* later defines K'art'li as 'the vast territory where the liturgy is celebrated and prayers are made in the Georgian language; except for *Kyrie eleison*, which is said in Greek'.[569] However, epigraphic evidence from the early tenth and possibly the late ninth centuries indicates the presence of Greek-speaking clergy in the Abkhaz kings' Apsilian territories. A funerary inscription was found in Novyi Afon (near Anakopia) for an archbishop of Anakopia (ἀρχιεπισκ[οπίας Ἀν]ακουφᾶν), inscribed by a priest called Eustathios and dated to 6437 AM, 2nd Indiction (929 CE), in letters entirely typical for Greek epigraphy of this period.[570] Also in Novyi Afon, a Greek inscription over the south door to the Church of Simon the Canaanite has very tentatively been read as giving the year 898–9 CE.[571] Vinogradov argues the archbishop of

[568]The superior qualities of Klarjet'i, relative to the territories controlled by the Abkhaz king are emphasised. The monastery of Ube (Ubisi) is in Imereti, in the middle and upper Rioni/Phasis River. The capital of the Abkhaz kings was at Kutaisi in Imereti. *Life of Grigol*, ch. 20–2, tr., pp. 43–4. Note again the ties to Jerusalem rather than Antioch or Constantinople; for Ubisi, see: W. Beridse and E. Neubauer, *Die Baukunst des Mittelaltelters in Georgien vom 4. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1981), p. 87, pl. 58.

[569] *Life of Grigol*, ch. 33, tr., p. 63. The same passage emphasises the autonomy of the Church of Mc'xet'a: the same Bishop Eprem who defined K'art'li decreed that its Church could bless its own myrrh, rather than obtaining it from Jerusalem.

[570] A.Iu. Vinogradov, 'Epigrafika. Nadpisi s Anakopiiskoi gory', in *Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsarstva VIII-XI vekov. Khristianskie pamiatniki Anakopiiskoi kreposti* (St. Petersburg, 2011), pp. 212–15; Vinogradov and Gugushvili, *Abkhazskii katolikosat*, p.25 n. 108 (with revised reading). Note the use of a Byzantine indiction date.

[571] ΜΦΣ Ϛ(?)ΥΖ: interpreted as: μ(ηνὶ) Φ(ευρουαρίου) ἔ(τους) ϚΥΖ', 'month of February, the year 6407', based on a correction of the sigma to an epsilon and a reading of the fourth letter as a stigma. This would give a very early date for the church, which is dated on architectural grounds to around the tenth century. The church was rededicated to Simon the Canaanite in the 19th century: Vinogradov, 'Epigrafika', p. 221; D.B. Beletskii and A.Iu. Vinogradov, 'Khramovaia arkhitektura Anakopiiskoi kreposti', in *Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva,* pp. 19–21.

Anakopia should be identified with the archbishop of Sebastopolis of the Byzantine *Notitiae*.[572] Meanwhile, he argues the Abkhazian king himself (either Kostanti I, r. ca. 892/3–ca. 922/3 or Giorgi II, r. ca. 922/3 –957) should be identified with the fragmentary Greek donor inscription in the church at Bombor in Gudauta region.[573] A fragment of a façade relief with a *ktētor* inscription of Giorgi II was found in a church in the village of Khuap in the same region.[574]

The epigraphic evidence may be a reflection of the close ties between the Byzantine Empire and the Abkhaz kings from the 880s. Bagrat son of Demetre had grown up in exile in Constantinople, after his aunt had helped the *mt'avari* Ivane Shavliani seize the royal title of *mep'e*.[575] In approximately 882, the Byzantine Emperor Basil I (r. 867–86) sent Bagrat back to Abkhazia with military support in successful bid to depose Ivane's son Adarnase and reinstate the original reigning dynasty.[576] The Byzantine authorities saw their intervention in Abkhazia as a means for influencing the wider politics of the Caucasus. From 881, Constantinople had been providing asylum to Nasra, one of the Bagrationi family, who had murdered his cousin Davit', then holding the Byzantine court title of *kouropalatēs* of Iberia.[577] Once Bagrat had retaken Abkhazia from Adarnase Shavliani, and had married the latter's widow, Nasra's sister, he brought Nasra back to the Caucasus (probably in ca. 884/5), and provided Nasra with troops to capture a series of

[572] See §5.2 above.
[573] Vinogradov and Gugushvili, *Abkhazskii katolikosat*, p. 26; A.Iu. Vinogradov and D.V. Beletskii, 'Bamborskii khram i problema "kupol'nogo zala" v Vizantii i na Kavkaze', *RA* (2012), 3, p. 100. The inscription is read as: [κα]ὶ ὁ μάγιστρ[ος]: a Byzantine title that was held by the Abkhaz kings in the tenth century: *DAI,* ch. 46, lines 16–17; on the dates of the Abkhazian kings: see §5.4 below.
[574] E.Iu. Endol'tseva, 'Kamennye rel'efy Anakopii', in *Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsarstva*, p. 134.
[575] *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p. 263.
[576] *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p. 264.
[577] Sumbat Davit'is-dze, *The Life and Tale of the Bagrationis*, ch. 25, tr. Rapp, pp. 357–8; *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, pp. 263–4. The title of *kouropalatēs* was a very senior Byzantine court title, and could not technically be inherited from father to son without an official appointment from Constantinople. The first *kouropalatēs* of Iberia mentioned in Byzantine sources is Adarnase, son of the murdered Bagrat, who was honoured with the title by Leo VI. According to Georgian sources, it had been bestowed on members of his extended family since the first half of the ninth century. Constantine VII's silence on Adarnase's immediate predecessors, his father Bagrat and his uncle Gurgēn, may have been to conceal Basil I's complicity in the assassination of Bagrat and the backing of Gurgēn against Adarnase in the 880s: *DAI*, ch. 45, lines 33–6; *De ceremoniis*, ii, ch. 48, 52; pp. 687, 711; Oikonomidès, *Les listes,* pp. 47, 97, 137, 245, 292–3; Martin-Hisard, 'Costantinople et les archontes', pp. 439–50.

fortresses in Samts'khe (Mischia).[578] Nasra was also aided by Alan troops, led by a certain Baqat'ar, presumably brought across the Caucasus through Abkhazian mediation. The combined invasion force was perceived as a direct threat by both Georgian and Armenian elites, who united to defeat Nasra and his Alan and Abkhaz allies in 885. [579]

The results of these initiatives were mixed from a Byzantine perspective. Close ties had been established with the Abkhazian rulers, and via them a link to the Alans, but the attempt to extend indirect influence into the 'Armeno-Georgian marchlands' from the north had ended in defeat.[580] In 884, Ašot I Bagratuni had been crowned as king of Armenia (*t'agawor Hayoc'*) by the monophysite katholikos Gēorg of Armenia, with the benediction of the Muslim governor ʿĪsā b. al-Shaykh al-Shaybanī and the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Mu'tamid.[581] The *History of Armenia,* written by the pro-Byzantine katholikos Yovhannēs Drasxanakert'ci (ca. 915–925), tactfully passes over the Abkhaz and likely Byzantine backing for Nasra's campaign. Nonetheless, Yovhannēs does describe

[578] Sumbat Davit'is-dze, ch. 26, tr. Rapp, p.358; *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p.264. The date of ca.884/5 is based on the notice of Sumbat Davit'is-dze that Nasra had spent several years in Constantinople following his murder of Davit' in *k'oronikon* 101 [881 CE], but was killed in *k'oronikon* 105 [885 CE]. Toumanoff reports the date of Nasra's death as *k'oronikon* 108 [888 CE], which appears to be the basis on which he dates the return of Bagrat to Abkhazia in 887 CE (see §5.4 below), and the coronation of Adaranse as *mep'e* of K'art'li in 888 CE: C. Toumanoff, 'The Bagratids of Iberia from the Eighth to the Eleventh Century', *Le Muséon,* 74 (1961), Nos. 15, 17, 23, pp. 18–25. However, Qaukhch'ishvili's edition of Sumbat Davit'is-dze clearly reports the date as *k'oronikon* 105: *K'art'lis C'xovreba ,* ed. S. Qaukhch'ishvili, repr. *K'art'lis C'xovreba: The Georgian Royal Annals and their Medieval Armenian Adaptation,* ed. S. Rapp Jr. (Delmar, N.Y., 1998), i, p. 379, line 14. Samts'khe, with its chief fortress of Ojrxe, had been held by Nasra's father Guaram, as part of an assemblage of lands that had once formed the Iberian March (the Vitaxate of Gugark'/Moskhia) of Arsacid Armenia. Guaram broke these up when he retired to a monastery, which may have been a cause for Nasra's murder of Davit', one of the claimants: C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, D.C., 1963), pp. 489–90. The Armenian term Gugark' does not appear in Georgian sources: R.H. Hewsen, 'Introduction to Armenian Historical Geography IV: The Vitaxates of Arsacid Armenia. A Reexamination of the Territorial Aspects of the Institution (Part Two). IV. The Vitaxate of Moskhia: (The Iberian March)', *REArm* 22 (1990–1), pp. 147–83, esp. p. 147 n. 3; Constantine VII refers to this region as that of 'the Mischians' (τῶν Μισχιῶν): DAI, ch. 46, line 48.

[579] *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, pp. 264–5. On Baqat'ar: see §5.7 below.

[580] 'Armeno-Georgian marchlands': Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 435–99.

[581] Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'I, *History of Armenia*, ch. 29, tr. Maksoudian p. 128; for the precise date, 26 August 884, see, id. (comm.), p. 273. The Council of Širakavan in 862 reconfirmed the Armenian Church's rejection of the Council of Chalcedon, and Ašot's attempts to bring about reconciliation with Photios were ultimately rebuffed: J. Darrouzès, 'Deux lettres inédites de Photius aux Arméniens', *REB*, 29 (1971), pp. 137–81; *Les Régestes des actes du patriarcat de Constatniople,* ed. V. Grumel, Fasc. II (Rome, 1936), Nos. 473, 515, 516, 448; pp. 84–5, 103–5, 119–20; Whittow, *Making*, p. 218; T. Greenwood, 'Failure of a Mission? Photius and the Armenian Church', *Le Muséon*, 119:1–2 (2006), pp. 123–67.

a campaign against 'barbarous peoples' in Gugark' (Mischia) after the coronation, but before the establishment of treaties with the king of Egrisi (Bagrat of Abkhazia) and the Byzantine emperor Basil I (r. 867–86).[582] Meanwhile, the defeat of Nasra and his allies provided Adarnase, son of the murdered Bagrat *kouropalatēs*, with an opening to have himself proclaimed king (*mep'e*) of K'art'li.[583] Adarnase then consolidated his position by defeating his cousin Gurgēn, described in *Matiane K'art'lisa* as belonging to the pro-Abkhaz party among the Bagrationi of K'art'li, and holder of the title of *kouropalatēs*.[584] In recognition of this state of affairs, Leo VI (r. 886–912) now made Adarnase *kouropalatēs*.[585]

Nonetheless, the Abkhaz rulers continued to counter-balance the new monarchies of K'art'li and Armenia. Early in the tenth century, King Kostanti I of Abkhazia seized much of the territory that Ašot I Bagratuni and his son Smbat had annexed from the Bagrationi of K'art'li ('the land of the Gugarac'ik' who lived near the gates of the Alans'), as well as the remaining lands of Adarnase's kingdom.[586] Once again Adarnase and the Armenian king (now Smbat) cooperated against the Abkhazians, and Kostanti was briefly imprisoned in Ani. However, according to Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i, Smbat soon decided it was safer to re-confirm Kostanti as *mep'e* of Abkhazia than to allow its people 'to set up as their king one who was more tyrannical', which is to say, more expansionist and perhaps more likely to use Alan allies in south Caucasian affairs again. The

[582] Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 29, pp. 128–9.
[583] Sumbat Davit'is-dze, ch. 29, tr. Rapp, p.358: between the death of Nasra in 885, and the death of Adarnase's own son Sumbat Artanujeli in 889. Universally dated to 888 in the modern literature, but any point between 885 and 889 appears possible. The title was confirmed by king Smbat Bagratuni of Armenia in 899: Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 36, pp. 150–1.
[584] *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p. 263; Sumbat Davit'is-dze, ch. 32, tr. Rapp, p. 359. Toumanoff suggested the Byzantines had made Gurgēn *kouropalatēs*, instead of Adarnase, because of his pro-Abkhaz/anti-Armenian leanings: C. Toumanoff, 'Armenia and Georgia', *CMH*, 4:1 (Cambridge, 1966), p. 613.
[585] *DAI,* ch. 45, lines 35–6.
[586] Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 41; *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p. 265. Before Kostanti's campaign, Yovhannēs claimed that in the 890s Smbat's territories had extended 'to the foot of the Caucasus Mountains, that is to say, Gugark', and Canark' as far as the Gate of the Alans' (Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 31, p. 139), while later he writes that the *k'oriskopos* (of the Canark') 'ruled over the Gugark' which is near the Gate of the Alans' (ch. 59, p. 206), in ca. 918. It seems unlikely that Smbat ever actually exerted direct control as far north as the Darial Pass, but Yovhannēs' use of the term Gugark' indicates the 'Armeno-Georgian marchlands' were perceived as a possible invasion route for peoples of the North Caucasus.

consequence for Adarnase of K'art'li was the partitioning of his royal lands between the Armenians and Abkhazians, and a souring of his relations with the Armenian king.[587]

5.4. The Alan dossier of Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos

As we shall see, the relationship between the Byzantine authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical and the Abkhazian and Georgian elites is of significance for both the dating and the wider interpretation of Nicholas Mystikos's dossier of letters on the Alan mission. The letters constitute one of the major written sources for Byzantine attitudes and policy towards the mountains of the North Caucasus. Nicholas's career as a churchman, but also as a politician and statesman in his own right, mean that his letters offer a unique combination of perspectives on imperial policy in the region: ecclesiological, pastoral, and geopolitical. Nicholas was deposed from the Patriarchate in 907 as a consequence of his opposition to the Emperor Leo VI's fourth marriage to Zoe Karbonopsina, mother of the future emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos. The crisis split the Byzantine Church between partisans of Nicholas and Euthymios (Patriarch, 907 – 912, d. 917), and rumbled on long after its formal resolution by the Tome of Union on 9 July 920.[588] The tetragamy affair was a lightning rod for a whole range of political conflicts, concerning the internal organisation of the Byzantine Church, its relationship to the Universal Church, its relationship to the Emperor, the dynastic politics of the Macedonian dynasty, their rivals, and associated court factions.[589]

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[587] Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 41, pp. 159–60; *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p. 265. It appears that Adarnase was able to hold on to his hereditary lands closer to the Byzantine border, but his claim to be *mep'e* was purely titular thenceforth: Toumanoff, *Studies*, p. 492.

[588] Nicholas I, Patriarch of Cosntantinople, *Miscellaneous Writings,* ed. and tr. L.G. Westerink (Washington, D.C., 1981), No. 200A, B, pp. 56–69. The parties divided by the tetragamy affair were not reconciled until the Patriarchate of Sisinnios II (996–8): Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, p. 341.

[589] G. Dagron, 'L'église et l'état (milieu IXe-fin Xe siècle)', in Dagron *et al.* (eds.) *Histoire du Christianisme,* iv, pp. 186–97.

Since Nicholas's collected letters were edited by Jenkins and Westerink in 1973, it has been generally accepted that all of the surviving letters, including the entire Alan dossier, should be dated to Nicholas's second patriarchate.[590] Another document, listing episcopal sees, attributed to Nicholas Mystikos, can also be shifted to the second patriarchate, for reasons discussed below.[591] The collection reflects the vicissitudes of Nicholas's second patriarchate: vindicating his position immediately after his restoration to the Patriarchal see in 912 (e.g. Letters 32, 79), conducting foreign policy as *de facto* ruler in 913–14 (e.g. Letters 1, 2), in severe difficulties following his expulsion from the palace at the beginning of the regency of Zoe Karbonopsina (914–18), and then developing a working relationship with Romanos. A very substantial percentage of the collection as a whole is devoted to Nicholas's correspondence with Nicholas's 'spiritual son' (πνευματικός τέκνος), the Bulgar Tsar Symeon.[592] Taken together, the collection of letters to Symeon appears to have an apologetic character, culminating as it does with Letter 31, which announces itself as the end of a long correspondence and then responds to accusations made against Nicholas by Symeon to the Emperor (Romanos) in November 924.[593] Nicholas's defence that he had in fact been trying to restrain the pro-war party among the Senate, the *stratēgoi* and the inhabitants of Constantinople, picks up a long-standing theme in this collection. The impression that the collection was at least partially assembled to vindicate Nicholas is strengthened by the fact that Letter 31 is immediately followed in the main manuscript witness (P: Patmos 178, X-XI ss.) by the longest of all, Letter 32 to the Pope (Anastasius III), dated to 912,

[590] Nicholas, *Letters*, pp. xxviii–xxxi.
[591] Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae*, 7; Nicholas, *Misc.,* No. 191; Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', pp. 218–30.
[592] There are 27 letters to Symeon, far more than to any other correspondent, in number and total length: in the Jenkins and Westerink edition, out of a total of 8537 lines of Greek text, 3287 (37%) are devoted to Symeon. The only correspondent to come close is Nicholas's close friend, Gregory, Metropolitan of Ephesos, to whom we have 15 letters, with a total of 361 lines (4%).
[593] Symon the Logothete, *Chronicle,* ed. Wahlgren, pp. 320–4; Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, pp. 218–21.

which sets out Nicholas's position on the tetragamy affair and once again defends his own conduct.[594]

The manuscript tradition suggests that work was undertaken early on in order to organise Nicholas's letters, perhaps first by Nicholas himself, and then by his supporters. This would have involved collecting, sorting and filtering out copies of Nicholas's correspondence in the Patriarchal archives, and then beginning to draw up the redaction underlying manuscript P, which contains the first 163 letters. The manuscripts which provide evidence for the remaining letters (Q: Patmos 706, XII s.; A: Angelicus gr.13, XI s.), and the Vienna manuscript (V: Vienna Phil. gr.342, XI s.), which provides alternative witness for a handful of the letters contained in P, may reflect different redactions of the correspondence.[595] However, they indicate a prior process of weeding out any correspondence that could be politically embarrassing in the 920s, whether that be the correspondence of the first patriarchate, or, for example, anything indicating Nicholas's conflict with Romanos at the time of the coup.[596]

All of the letters relating to the mission to the Alans belong within the manuscript P. The dossier includes five letters to Peter, Archbishop of Alania (Letters 52, 118, 133, 134, 135) and two letters to consecutive rulers of Abkhazia (Letters 51, 46). To this might be added a letter to missionaries (Letter 79), and, possibly, a letter to a monk named Euthymios (Letters 148). Also relevant are two letters to Symeon, referring to missionary work among the Alans (Letter 9), and threatening Alan involvement in a coalition of northern Byzantine allies against the Bulgars (Letter 23); a letter to George, the ruler (*exousiastēs*) of Abkhazia (Letter 162) and a letter to the *kouropalatēs* of Iberia (Letter 91). Finally, a letter of Nicholas that does not survive in Greek but is reproduced in

[594] Ep. 32 is 517 lines long in the Jenkins and Westerink edition; the next longest is Ep. 9 to Symeon (278 lines).
[595] Nicholas, *Letters*, pp. xxxi–xxxv.
[596] Cf. Symeon the Logothete, *Chornicle*, ed. Wahlgren, pp. 309–10.

Armenian in the *History* of Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i, provides an important, and thus far overlooked, chronological indicator for the corpus.[597]

While all of the surviving Greek letters above appear in P, four of the letters also appear in the collection in Q misattributed to Symeon *magistros* and *logothetēs tou dromou* (Letters 51, 52, 118, 148), and two of them appear in V (Letters 133, 134). [598] Letter 148 is addressed to a certain monk Euthymios, engaged in missionary activity in a remote place. There is no internal evidence that allows the conclusive identification of this Euthymios with the monk sent to help Peter in his missionary work among the Alans (Letter 135), or with the monk who took Letter 9 to Symeon the Bulgar and is commended to the latter for his earlier missionary work among the Alans. However, the close proximity of letters 148 and 118 in manuscript Q (fol. 186v–187r and 187v, respectively), indicates their association in the original dossier of letters in Nicholas's archives. The appearance of these letters in more than one manuscript, and the association of several of them with Symeon the *logothetēs tou dromou* might also suggest the 'Alan dossier' evoked renewed interest in the imperial chancellery in the mid-tenth century.[599]

The dating of the Alan dossier in the Jenkins and Westerink edition rested on Cyril Toumanoff's chronology of the Abkhazian kings.[600] Letters 51 and 46 were addressed to consecutive rulers of Abasgia. Letter 51, presented as the beginning of the correspondence, thanked the Abkhazian ruler for his support of the mission to the Alans and for the Archbishop. Letter 46 opened with

[597] Yovhannēs, *History,* ch. 54, tr. Maksoudian, pp. 189–191; Nicholas, *Misc.*. No. 198.
[598] Ep. 134 to Peter the Archbishop in V 87v is mistitled to imply that it is addressed to Constantine the *parakoimōmenos*, following Nicholas's extended letter of consolation to the latter (Ep.47 II).
[599] See §5.9 below.
[600] C. Toumanoff, 'Chronology of the Kings of Abasgia', *Le Muséon*, 69 (1956), pp. 73–82; this superceded the chronology adopted by Grumel: Grumel, 'Notes', pp. 57–8; *Regestes*, ed. V. Grumel, 1st edn, I. Fasc. II (Rome, 1936), Nos. 599, 609–10, 618–22; cf. *Regestes*, ed. V. Grumel, 2nd edn., rev. J. Darrouzès, I. Fasc. II (Paris, 1989), Nos. 654–9, 689–90. The earliest study on the letters proposed a dating to the second patriarchate, but on different grounds: Iu. Kulakovskii, 'Khristianstvo u Alan', *VV*, 1 (1998), p. 7 n. 1; some scholars continued to use Grumel's chronology after Toumanoff's revision: I.Chr. Kōnstantinidēs, *Nikolaos I, ho mystikos (ca. 852–925 m. Ch.), Patriarchēs Kōnstantinoupoleōs (901–907, 912–25): symvolē eis tēn ekklēsiastikēn kai politikēn historian tou 1. tertatrou tou 10. m. Ch. aiōnos* (Athens, 1967), p. 93 n. 8; N. Golb and O. Pritsak (eds.), *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982), p. 135.

words of consolation to the Abkhazian ruler on the death of his father and then asked the latter to continue his father's work in supporting the Alan mission.[601] Toumanoff's identification of the kings in question was based upon a comparison of the data contained within a text known as the *Divan of Abkhazian Kings*, and the *K'art'lis Ts'khovreba*.[602] Grumel had dated Letters 51 and 46 to 902 and 906 CE, respectively, and had identified the recipients as kings Bagrat I and his son Kostanti I.[603] However, according to Toumanoff's calculations, Bagrat should already have died (ca. 899) before the beginning of Nicholas's first patriarchate, while he placed Kostanti's death around 915/16. He therefore proposed that Letter 51 had been sent to Kostanti [I], and Letter 46 had been sent to his son, Giorgi II.[604]

Toumanoff was able to reconcile the notice in *K'art'lis Ts'khovreba* that Kostanti had died after Smbat I of Armenia (in 914) with a method of counting back the regnal years for the Abkhazian kings down to the death of the final king in the *Divan*, Bagrat III, known to have died in 1014, by allowing a margin of error of a year at either end of each reign.[605] This still left a problem with dating the beginning of Kostanti's reign. Counting back 39 years from 915/16, Kostanti I would be ruling from ca. 877/8. Reports in the *K'art'lis Ts'khovreba* led Toumanoff to the conclusion that Kostanti's father, Bagrat I, began his 12 year reign in ca. 887.[606] He explained the missing years on the basis of the legitimist nature of the *Divan* text, which had simply absorbed the reigns of the

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[601] Nicholas, *Letters,* Ep. 51, 46, pp. 278–80, 264–6.
[602] *Divan of the Abkhazian Kings*, ed. and tr. Rapp, *Studies*, pp. 482–4; first known via Greek translation by Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem (1669-1707): *Historia peri tōn en Ierosolymois patriarkheosantōn* (Bucharest, 1715), p. 1200; Taqaïshvili published a translation of a later eighteenth-century manuscript copy of the Georgian text underlying Dositheos's list: E. Taqaïshvili, 'Les sources des notices du Patriarche de Jérusalem Dosithée sur les rois d'Aphkasie', *Journal Asiatique*, 210 (1927), pp. 357–68. The document is prefaced with a note by Kostanti II (1407–14), explaining that he had found the document in the archive of Kutaisi and had it recopied; there follows a list of 21 kings down to Bagrat II, who is identified as the compiler of the list. Lengths of reigns, but no dates, are included for all of the rulers from Leon to Bagrat's prececessor; the document is then appended with the regnal years for Bagrat and his successor.
[603] Using Ibn Rusta to provide a *terminus ante quem* of 903 for Ep. 51, and a date of 906 for the death of the Abkhaz king: *Régestes*, ed. V. Grumel, 1st edn, Nos. 609, 599; see §§5.2, 5.3 above.
[604] Toumanoff refers to the son of Bagrat I as Kostanti III, as he is the third ruler with that name in the *Divan*, but his predecessors belonged to the period before the establishment of the Abkhaz royal title, so he is here referred to as Kostanti I.
[605] *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p. 266–7; death of Bagrat III: 7 May 1014: Sumbat Davit'is-dze, ch. 56, tr. Rapp, p. 363; Toumanoff, 'Chronology', p. 78.
[606] Toumanoff, 'Chronology', p. 78 n. 18.

two 'usurper' kings, Ioane Shavliani and his son Adarnase.[607] However, this reconstruction leaves a number of problems: Bagrat returned from Constantinople and deposed Adarnase Shavliani before 885; the reduction of Kostanti's reign from 39 to less than 20 years is in radical disagreement with the *Divan*; *K 'art 'lis Ts'khovreba* reports that 'several years' passed between the deaths of Smbat and Kostanti; Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i implies the 'King of Egrisi' in 904 and 922 were the same person.[608] Bernadette Martin-Hisard's alternative suggestion, that Kostanti might have been associated with the kingship during the life of his father (i.e. 29 years sole reign, preceded by 10 years co-reign), is attractive, as the circumstances of Bagrat's return to Abkhazia to restore his family's rule with Byzantine help may well have suggested the adoption of the Byzantine practice of co-rule for shoring up the succession.[609]

Martin-Hisard's revised chronology leaves open the question of when Nicholas's first letter to Kostanti I was sent. The letter exchange between the Armenian katholikos Yovhannēs and Nicholas may provide the answer. In 913–914, Nicholas was regent of the Empire, having anathematised his rivals within the church and having suppressed the revolt of Constantine Doukas. This was the period when the Armenian king Smbat I Bagratuni was imprisoned in Dwin by the Muslim governor Yūsuf b. Abī Sāj.[610] In his *History,* Yovhannēs reports that he was living in exile in Gugark' at the time, and gives the text of a letter which he claims was sent to him by Nicholas Mystikos, calling on Yovhannēs to unite the rulers of Armenia, Iberia, Albania and Abasgia against the Sājid emir.[611] Although there is no surviving Greek text of Nicholas's letter to Yovhannēs, it appears to be an authentic translation.[612] The letter alludes to other letters sent to the *kouropalatēs* of Iberia (Adarnase) and the ruler of Abasgia (Kostanti), which are not

[607] Toumanoff, 'Chronology', pp. 78, 80.
[608] On Bagrat's return from Contantinople, see §5.3 above; *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p.267; Yovhannēs, *History,* ch. 41, 53, tr. Maksoudian, pp. 158–60, 215–16.
[609] Martin-Hisard, 'Constantinople et les archontes', p.460 n. 685.
[610] Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 49, tr. pp. 176–7.
[611] Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 53–54, pp. 189–91, 297; Nicholas, *Misc.*, No .198.
[612] For instance, here the text follows Byzantine usage in referring to the *kouropalatēs* and to the 'prince of Abasgia' (*awagn Ap'xazac'*), rather than the kings of Iberia and Egrisi: Yovhannēs, *History*, pp. 36–7.

preserved. This may furnish the *terminus ante quem* for Nicholas's first letter to king Kostanti. Letter 51, addressed to the *exousiastēs* of Abasgia, specifies that it is the first letter to the addressee (ἰδοὺ πρῶτοι διὰ τοῦ γράμματος προσαγορεύομέν).[613] This would imply that it precedes the letters sent simultaneously with the letter to Yovhannēs (June 913 to February 914). Letter 51 refers to the presence of an archbishop in Alania and the baptism of the Alan ruler, which would then be dated before this point (ca. 913).

In the Armenian letter attributed to Nicholas, the latter refers to 'the Armenians, the Iberians, and the Albanians' as the 'faithful flock' of Yovhannēs, the non-Chalcedonian katholikos of Armenia.[614] This corresponded to Yovhannēs' own conception of the status of the Armenian Church, but it would have been a significant snub to the Iberian katholikos for the sake of closer relations with Yovhannēs.[615] This may be an interpolation by Yovhannēs, but alternatively, it might indicate a reason why the Greek version was suppressed once the political context had changed. Within a year, Nicholas had been expelled from the palace, and Yovhannēs had decided he could not risk too close an association with the Chalcedonians.[616] Meanwhile, Byzantine military aid had failed to enable Ašot II to capture Dwin from the Sājid-backed rival king Ašot the *sparabet*.[617] Signficantly, there is no suggestion that the Abkhazian church was under Yovhannēs' jurisdiction. While Nicholas appears to have countenanced Armenian claims to authority over Chalcedonian Christians who were beyond the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople, he could claim authority over the Greek-speaking bishops of the Abkhazian coast. It might even

[613] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 51, lines 3–4, p. 278.
[614] Yovhannes, *History,* ch. 54, pp. 189–90. The Albanian Church was pro-Chalcedonian until the Council of Partav in 706 CE, when it was subordinated to the Armenian Church, with Umayyad support: Movsēs Dasxuranci, *History,* iii, ch. 3–11, pp. 189–202. In the later tenth century, the north-western part of Albania was incorporated into the Chalcedonian Iberian Church: A.Iu. Kazarian, 'Albaniia Kavkazskaia', *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia,* vol. 1 (Moscow, 2000), pp. 458–9. *De ceremoniis,* ii, ch. 48, p. 688 addresses the *katholikoi* of Armenia, Iberia and Abasgia separately, but in that order.
[615] Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 53, p. 189. This was not necessarily a snub to Iberian *mep'e* and *kouropalatēs,* Adarnase, who did not control Mts'khet'a, with whom Yovhannēs was staying at this time.
[616] Yohannēs, *History*, ch. 55, p. 198.
[617] Yovhannēs, *History*, ch. 56, p. 202.

have been hoped that the marginalisation of the Church of Mts'khet'a would strengthen the position of the Byzantine clergy of the coastal region.

Evidence that Nicholas was taking a keen interest in the ecclesiastical organisation of the north-west Caucasus at the beginning of his second patriarchate comes from Letter 79, in Jenkins and Westerink's collection, addressed to unidentified missionaries. The letter, which did not appear in Grumel's register, is datable to summer 912, since it refers to Nicholas's recent restoration to the Patriarchal throne and his sweeping action against the Euthymian clergy.[618] The references to the desolate place and strangeness of the customs of the people, the absence of other obvious fields of mission at this time, and the allusion to a forthcoming change in personnel all indicate a connection with the mission that preceded the sending of Peter to Alania.[619] Nicholas treats the addressees of Letter 79 as allies, implying they had already been sent during his first patriarchate. Vinogradov and Beletskii have suggested that the appointment of Peter was planned around the time of the sending of Letter 79, even if his actual departure was about eighteen months later. They date Peter's departure to 914, since Letters 133 and 52 refer to the grave difficulties Nicholas had been experiencing at the time of Peter's departure: Vinogradov and Beletskii link this with the 22 days Nicholas was forced to take sanctuary in Hagia Sophia in February 914.[620] However, the time of Constantine Doukas's attempted coup, which Nicholas was accused of having encouraged, and which Nicholas had repressed with exceptional violence, or of Symeon of Bulgaria's appearance at the gates of Constantinople in 913, could also match the description.[621] This is compatible with Peter having already arrived when Kostanti of Abkhazia received his first

[618] cf. Nicholas, *Miscellaneous,* ed. Westerink, Op. 197, pp. 26–7; *Life of Euthymios, Patriarch of Constantinople*, ed. Karlin-Hayter (Brussels, 1970), pp. 115–25.
[619] Nicholas, *Letters,* Ep. 135, p. 442 refers to Euthymios the monk as Peter's predecessor.
[620] Nicholas, *Letters,* Ep. 52, pp. 282, 286; Ep. 133, p. 432; Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz i Senty*, pp. 21–3; S.N. Malakhov, 'Khristianizatsiia Alanii v 912-922 gg. (po pis'mam Nikolaia Mistika)', *Mir Pravoslaviia*, 3 (2000), pp. 30–1.
[621] Nicholas was accused of having incited the coup attempt, which he then attempted to cover up, and violently repressed (800 were killed according to one version), when made head of the regency council: *Life of Euthymios,* pp. 130–3; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, pp. 381–5; Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicle*, ed. Wahlgren, pp. 298–300.

letter from Nicholas ca. 913. Peter himself, meanwhile, may not have received his letters until a significant amount of time later (Ep. 133 appears never to have arrived, and was replaced by Ep. 52): hence his complaint at his neglect.[622]

At the end of August or the beginning of September 917, Nicholas sent a letter to Symeon of Bulgaria, delivered by Euthymios, abbot of the hermits of Mount Olympos in Bithynia. Nicholas asks Symeon to treat the envoy with respect, since he had 'sown the word of faith' among the Alans.[623] In a subsequent letter (Ep. 135) to Peter, Archbishop of Alania, Euthymios is referred to as Peter's predecessor as 'herald of piety' to the Alans.[624] It seems likely, therefore, that Euthymios can be identified as the leader of the unnamed missionaries of Letter 79, and that he had been sent (or had even travelled on his own initiative) at some point during Nicholas's first patriarchate. The date of Euthymios's original activities in the North Caucasus is not clear. The report of Ibn Rusta does not provide the firm chronological marker often attributed to it, but there is also nothing to exclude the earlier adoption of Christianity by an Alan ruler before the beginning of the tenth century, perhaps with Abkhazian support: Euthymios need not necessarily have been involved.

Nicholas's initial letters to Peter (Ep. 52 and 133), allude to pastoral difficulties experienced by the archbishop, in particular with regards to a marriage conducted by one of the Alan elite that contravened Church law, among other dubious practices.[625] The problem of an unlawful marriage inevitably had a particular resonance for Nicholas; here his advice is to show flexibility to prevent the mission from collapsing altogether. Nicholas appears to allude to his own handling of the tetragamy affair when he compares himself to a teacher 'hindered in reforming the disobedience

[622] Nicholas, *Letters*, p. 549.
[623] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 9, p. 68.
[624] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 135, p. 442.
[625] '…habits which conduce to the more pagan character (τὸν ἐθνικώτερον τρόπον) of those who indulge in them': Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 52, pp. 284–6; Ep. 133, p. 434.

of his pupils' and is forced to show toleration for a time.[626] Nicholas's recommendation of tolerance in this case also echoes his response to a pagan sacrifice (involving fire and the ritual slaughter of dogs, oxen and sheep) conducted in Constantinople itself on the conclusion of a treaty, apparently with the Pechenegs. In letters (Ep. 66, 67), traditionally thought to be addressed to Constantine the *parakoimōmenos*, Nicholas recommends mild penances, but encourages the recipient to make a plea to those eager to criticise the Church or the State that the sacrifice was made out of necessity brought on by the Bulgar threat. In the Patmos 178 MS, these letters are immediately followed by a letter referring to its recipient's recent arrival in Cherson, and asking him to assist the city's new archbishop, whom Nicholas had sent to ordain priests in Khazaria.[627] Constantine Zuckerman has argued that the three letters were in fact all addressed to John Bogas, who was made *stratēgos* of Cherson following his conclusion of the treaty with the Pechenegs, and all sent in relatively quick succession in 914.[628] If so, this would represent another instance of Nicholas accepting unorthodox practices in order to develop a new network of political alliances and bishoprics in the northern and eastern Black Sea region early in his second patriarchate.

Nicholas's pastoral advice to Peter also sheds interesting light on the structure of Alan society, at least in so far as it was imagined in Constantinople. Nicholas recommends that Peter should take particular care not to alienate those of higher rank (τῆς ὑψηλοτέρας τάξεως): while he could treat their subjects (τοὺς ὑποχειρίους) more severely and authoritatively (αὐστηρότερον καὶ ἐξουσιαστικώτερον), those with 'great power' (μέγα δυναμένους) to overturn the whole mission should be treated with caution.[629] The language of class division mirrors that used in tenth

[626] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 52, p. 286. The polemic between Nicholas, Patriarch Euthymios and Arethas of Caesarea and their partisans concerned the correct deployment of οἰκονομία, not whether it should ever be used at all. Nicholas accused the four metropolitans he deposed in 912 of making a dispensation without Patriarchal authority: Nicholas, *Miscellaneous*, Op. 197, p. 24; cf. *Life of Euthymios*, ch. 18, pp. 115–17; cf. the explantion of Arethas's conversion from rigorist opposition to the tetragamy to Euthymian partisan: id., ch. 15, pp. 103–5.
[627] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 66–8, pp. 310–14.
[628] Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', pp. 221–3.
[629] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 52, pp. 284–6.

century Byzantine legal texts, which also defined class in terms both of rank (τάξις) and power to act (δύναμις), while the word for the manner in which Peter could behave towards the remainder of his flock evokes the titles given for Alan and Abkhazian rulers in Byzantine texts (ἐξουσιαστοκράτωρ, ἐξουσιαστής).[630] The evidence of preceding chapters makes clear that hierarchy within Alan society was not simply a Byzantine fiction, or a Byzantine import, but the attitudes to social class and the resources that Byzantine missionaries brought with them certainly had the potential to reinforce certain forms of it, as the final section of the chapter will argue.

Nicholas's next two letters to Peter offered the archbishop consolation for their physical separation, but assured him of their spritiual communion. Letter 118 held out the possibility of their meeting, but Letter 134 reassured Peter that he was at no disadvantage with those with whom Nicholas is currently conversing: the promise of Letter 118 had not been fulfilled.[631] Two occasions for which Peter might have particularly hoped to be recalled to Constantinople were the Union of the Church in June–July 920, or its anniversary the following year. In his preface to a list of bishops (*Notitia* 7), Nicholas refers to an argument over precedence at an important meeting of bishops, and a later meeting of bishops in Hagia Eirene, where the emperor, patriarch and bishops agreed on a proper order.[632] Zuckerman has convincingly argued that the meetings in question were the Union and the first celebration of its feast-day the year after, respectively, and that *Notitia* 7 should be viewed as the outcome of the discussions (or Nicholas's take on it, following a 'synodal inspection').[633] Peter of Alania may have been worried about his ability to defend his position in the church hierarchy if he was not able to be there in person.

[630] On definitions of the '*dynatoi*', see: R. Morris, 'The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality', *P&P*, 73 (1976), pp. 3–27.
[631] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 118, 134, pp. 406–8, 436.
[632] Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae*, 7, p. 270; Nicholas, *Miscellaneous*, No. 191, pp. 2–4.
[633] Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', p. 220–6; rather than to the first patriarchate, as traditionally held: Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae*, p. 78; Nicholas, *Miscellaneous*, p. 143; this would elimante one of the final remaining documents attributed to Nicholas's first patriarchate.

As it happens, *Notitia* 7 makes no reference to the see of Alania. Zuckerman argues that Peter's see was in fact represented in the list by Sebastopolis, but we have already seen that this post should probably be identified with the Byzantine clergy of Abkhazia, then coexisting with the Georgian clergy of the Abkhaz king's eastern and southern territories.[634] Alternatively, the Alan mission might have been represented by Soterioupolis, mentioned here for the first time.[635] Further possibilities are that the Alan mission was either never represented in Nicholas's *Notitia*, or it was removed. In the former case, Peter's worries would have been justified: after the 'synodol inspection' (possibly an interview with the Abkhazian bishops of Sebastopolis or Soterioupolis), perhaps it was decided that that the mission to the Alans had not been a success. This would have been in contrast with the efforts in the northern Black Sea region, where the archbishop of Cherson had been ordaining priests early in Nicholas's second patriarchate, and where there was now once again an archbishop of Sougdia, an archbishop (no longer a metropolitan with suffragans) of Gothia and, for the first time, an archbishop of Phoulai.[636] However, it seems most likely that the Alan mission *was* represented in the original list. *Notitia* 7 lists Romanoupolis as a suffragan of Kamachos (in Armenia), which, as Zuckerman argues, suggests the document was updated around the time of the founding of the latter fortress, between the submission of the *amīr* of Melitene in 927, and the annexation of the district in 934.[637] As we shall see, it was precisely at this time (320 AH/932 CE) that al-Mas'ūdī reports that

[634] Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', p. 228; Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz i Senty*, p. 24 n. 47; see §5.3 above.
[635] Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae,* 7, line 87, p. 274; Martin-Hisard tentatively suggests a connection, although she is working with the traditional dating of the *Notitia*: Martin-Hisard, 'Constantinople et les archontes', p. 272. The sees of Alania and Stoteriopolis were united and divided several times in later centuries: J. Darrouzès, 'Le traité des transferts: Édition critique et commentaire', *REB*, 42 (1984), No. 54, pp. 182, 206–7; id. (ed.), *Notitiae*, 8, line 102; 11, line 122; 12, line 119; 14, line 104; 16, line 109; 17, line 72; 18, line 130; 19, line 172; Bryer and Winfield, *Topography*, pp. 347–50; the issue is confused by the existence of two different cities named Soterioupolis: one at Pityous in Abkhazia, and the other, also called Bourzō, on the river Mourgoule, south of the Akampsis (Çoruh) river, seat of a *stratēgos* in the later tenth century: cf. Oikonomidès (ed.), *Listes*, pp. 269, 362.
[636] Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae*, 7, lines 97–9; cf. Nicholas's praise for the archbishop of Cherson's work among a 'deluded nation': Nicholas, *Letters,* Ep. 106, p. 390; Zuckerman, 'Byznatium's Pontic Policy', pp. 220–6.
[637] Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae*, 7, line 666; Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy', pp. 219–20, 229.

Byzantine bishops and priests were expelled from the land of the Alans.[638] The Alan see could have lost its position in the list at this time.

The first years of Romanos's reign appears, in fact, to have been a period of renewed attention to the north-west Caucasus on the part of both Patriarch and new emperor. Letter 23, written in 922 to Symeon of Bulgaria, warns the latter that Romanos's government was organising the Alans alongside Rus', Pechenegs and Magyars in an alliance against the Bulgars.[639] There is no reason to infer from the reference to 'godless' nations in the same letter that the Alan mission had already collapsed by 922; but it does suggest that Romanos's government was seeking to use its connections to the north-west Caucasus for military recruitment.[640] Letter 162, probably written in 925, to Giorgi II of Abkhazia, alludes to the latter's offer of military assistance against the Bulgarians: it seems likely Giorgi's contacts with the Alans is envisaged.[641] Meanwhile, new opportunities and risks were opening up for Romanos in the region in 922–3. Martin-Hisard's revised chronology of the Abkhazian kings allows us to place the death of Kostanti I of Abkhazia at the same time as that of Adarnase IV, *kouropalatēs* and *mep'e* of Iberia/K'art'li, and of the Bagrationi prince then holding the crucial city of Artanuji in Klarjet'i.[642] An attempt by Romanos's government to take advantage of the succession crises to take direct control of Artanuji was quickly abandoned, but it took a concerted diplomatic effort to prevent the majority of the Bagrationi from joining forces with their Muslim neighbours against the Byzantines.[643] Meanwhile, Kostanti's two sons, Giorgi [II] and Bagrat, were fighting a civil war, with different members of the Bagrationi family joining on each side.[644] Nicholas's letter of reassurance to the

[638] al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, pp. 42–5; see §5.7 below.
[639] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 23, p. 158.
[640] *contra* Golb and Pritsak (eds.), *Hebrew Documents*, pp. 136–7; Malakhov, 'Khristianizatsiia', p. 33; see: Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz i Senty*, p. 31.
[641] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 162, p. 486; for an early 925, rather than late 924 date: Martin-Hisard, 'Byzance et les archontes', p. 463 n. 705.
[642] Marti-Hisard, 'Byzance et les archontes', pp. 455, 460, 520.
[643] *DAI*, ch. 46, pp. 214–22.
[644] Giorgi was supported by Ashot Kiskasis, who had offered Artanuji to the Byzantines, and was ultimately driven to exile in Abkhazia; Bagrat was supported by Ashot's son-in-law Gurgēn (Kourkenios) of Tao: *Matiane K'art'lisa*, tr. Thomson, p. 267; *DAI*, ch. 46, pp. 220–2.

new *kouropalatēs*, Ashot (Ep. 91), and his first letter to Giorgi (Ep. 46), sent with a gift of a mantle (ἱμάτιν), possibly signifying the bestowal (or confirmation) of the title of *magsitros,* appear to be part of the attempt to smooth over relations after the débacle.[645]

Once again, ecclesiastical reorganisations accompanied responses to the changing military and political situation. Nicholas's last letter to Peter (Ep. 135), refers to a reorganisation of the Alan mission. Euthymios, the earlier missionary to the Alans, had been sent back to help Peter, which had evidently created tensions between the Byzantine clergy in the north-west Caucuasus.[646] It is unclear exactly the capacity in which Euthymios had been sent: as a suffragan, a second archbishop, following a partition of the diocese, or perhaps in order to establish a monastic community.[647] Al-Mas'ūdī refered to multiple bishops (*asāqifa*) and priests being driven out of the land of the Alans in 320 AH, but this may simply have meant multiple senior clerics: there is no reason why he should have had a precise knowledge of the region's fledgling ecclesiastical structure.[648] Letter 135 is traditionally dated after Nicholas's first letter to Giorgi (Ep. 46), which asks for support for the archbishop and makes no reference to the reorganisation, and which we have seen should be dated to ca. 923–4.[649] This therefore places the restructuring of the Alan mission in the aftermath of the wider reconsideration of the church hierarchy that accompanied the drawing up of *Notitia* 7, and in the aftermath of Romanos's interventions in the politics of the western Caucasus.

[645] At the time of the Artanuji crisis, Constantine the *droungarios* of the fleet had been sent with a 'ἱμάτιον μαγιστράτου' to give to Giorgi's rival, Gurgēn of Tao; Giorgi is referred to in *DAI* as a *magistros*: Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 46, 91, pp. 264–6, 352–4; *DAI*, ch. 46, p. 214–16.
[646] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 135, pp. 440–2.
[647] Cf. Kōnstantinidēs, *Nikolaos*, p. 95.
[648] al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, pp. 42–5.
[649] Dated by Jenkins and Westerink to 916 or 918 (before or after Euthymios's embassy to Symeon of Bulgaria, and after Giorgi's accession): Nicholas, *Letters*, pp. 577–8.

Table 5.1: Proposed dating of the Alan dossier of Nicholas Mystikos

Number	Recipient	Date
79	Missionaries in the North Caucasus	Summer 912
51	King Kostanti I of Abkhazia	913
Op. 198	Katholikos Yovhannēs of Armenia	913
133	Archbishop Peter of Alania	914–18 or 919/920
52	Archbishop Peter of Alania	914–18 or 919/920
9	Tsar Symeon of Bulgaria	Late Aug/Early Sept. 917
118	Archbishop Peter of Alania	Spring 921
134	Archbishop Peter of Alania	July 921
Op. 191	*[n/a: Notitia Episcopatuum 7]*	*Summer/Autumn 921 (revised 932-4)*
23	Tsar Symeon of Bulgaria	922
46	King Giorgi II of Abkhazia	923–4
162	King Giorgi II of Abkhazia	924–5
135	Archbishop Peter of Alania	923–5

(Part II) The *exousiokratōr* of the Alans

5.5. 'Encyclopaedism' and empire

A very significant portion of the surviving Byzantine writing on the North Caucasus and the Alans survives in collections made in the imperial palace in the mid-tenth century. When the Patriarch Tarasios and his associates were drawing up their projects for ecclesiastical organisation, including in territories controlled by the Khazars, in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, the patriarchal library was one of the few places in the Byzantine Empire where books were available in any number at all.[650] By the mid-tenth century, the Empire was much richer, and books were much more widely available and varied. The Macedonian emperors, above all Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, presented themselves as the originators of the cultural and intellectual revival. The preface to each volume of a vast collection of historical excerpts explained that Constantine had decided to remedy the neglect of the writings of empeorors and private citizens, by collecting, 'by means of diligent research all manner of books from all over the *oikoumene'*. [651] The contents were then selected to showcase their utility and their literary quality (εὐφράδειαν), and arranged according to a set of fifty-three headings.[652] In doing so, emperors such as Constantine VII were attempting to centralise upon the imperial palace a wider pattern of collecting and anthologising ('*cultura della sylloge*'), which was 'both more varied and less imperial' than Paul Lemerle's classic study of Byzantine 'encyclopaedism', and the imperial propaganda itself, allowed.[653]

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[650] C. Mango, 'The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire, A.D. 750-850' in I. Ševčenko and C. Mango (eds.), *Byzantine Books and Bookmen* (Washington, D.C., 1975), pp. 29–45

[651] Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Excerpta de legationibus* ed. C. de Boor (Berlin, 1903), p. 1; tr. A. Németh, 'Imperial Systematization of the Past. Emperor Constantine VII and His *Historical Excerpts*' (Doctoral Thesis, CEU, Budapest, 2010), pp. 184–5; id., 'The Imperial Systematisation of the Past in Constantinople. Constantine VII and his *Historical Excerpts*', in J. König and G. Woolf (eds.), *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 238.

[652] There are also 53 chapters in *DAI*, on the significance of which, see: Németh, 'Imperial Systematization', pp. 65–72, 185–6.

[653] P. Magdalino, 'Byzantine Encyclopaedism of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', in P. Deun and C. van Macé (eds.), *Encyclopaedic Trends in Byzantium?* (Leuven, 2011), p. 233; P. Odorico, 'La cultura della ΣΥΛΛΟΓΗ',

Empires are by their nature enterprises for the gathering in of people and resources (as well as for the organisation of their redistribution).[654] The second chapter of this thesis looked at this in terms of slaves; the fourth in terms of textiles. The production of the Constantinian *Excerpta* required the transfer to the palace of books from monasteries, of scribes to carry out the transcription and selection process, and the skins of around 10,000 sheep.[655] The imperial palace not only gathered books from monasteries, but also aimed to appropriate the moral authority that monasteries and the patriarchal church had accumulated, in particular over the course of the ninth century.[656] It also claimed some of the intellectual and cultural accomplishments of the early ninth-century iconoclast 'intelligentsia', while simultaneously proclaiming the orthodoxy of the present emperors: reflected in the curious duality of the presentation of Theophilos in the chronicle of *Theophanes Continuatus,* commissioned by Constantine VII.[657]

The government of Constantine VII had a particular motivation for emphasising the association between his person, the palace, and the patronage of learning. For quarter of a century, Constantine had been excluded from political power by Romanos I Lekapenos, who had systematically positioned members of his own family and supporters in the imperial succession, the administration and the church. The work known as *De administrando imperio*, but actually entitled, 'To his Son Romanos, the Emperor Crowned by God and Born in the Purple', was presented as advice from one emperor born in the imperial palace to another.[658] By contrast, Romanos Lekapenos is described as 'a common and illiterate fellow, and not from among those

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BZ, 83 (1990), pp. 1–21; id. 'Cadre d'exposition/cadre de pensée: la culture du recueil', in Deun and Macé (eds.) *Encyclopaedic Trends*, pp. 89–107; P. Lermerle, *Le Premier Humanisme Byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origins au Xe siècle* (Paris, 1971), p. 267.

[654] The 'state as centripetal population machine': Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, pp.64–73.

[655] Nemeth, 'Imperial Systematization', p. 4 n. 2; on the delivery of sheep from beyond the river Sangarios to the city of Constantinople: *The Book of the Eparch,* ch. 15–16, ed. Koder, pp. 124–9.

[656] Cf. hagiography: 'After more than a century where monastic leaders and patriarchs alone had had the privilege of using hagiographical collections for promoting their insitiiutions, the turn had now come to the emperor': C. Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes. Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen, 2002), p. 56.

[657] J. Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829 – 842. Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 429–60; Mango, 'Availability of Books', p. 45.

[658] *DAI,* Title, p. 45.

have been bred up in the palace'.[659] Constantine advises his son to use this criticism of the previous administration if any of the 'infidel and dishonourable tribes of the north' attempt to use the marriage of Maria Lekapena and Petar of Bulgaria as a precedent to demand marriage alliances.[660] It appears that the marriage in 927 had been the occasion of Constantine's own demotion in the college of emperors.[661] Jonathan Shepard has argued this personal motivation influenced Constantine's approach to northern peoples.[662] For Telemachos Lounghis, there were also wider ideological tensions at stake about the nature of 'Roman' imperialism: in claiming the authority of Constantine I for the principle that the only fitting marriage alliances for (Eastern) Roman emperors were with the Franks, the new Constantine was promoting a vision of 'limited ecumenicism' which renounced claims to rule over the former territories of the western Roman empire.[663] The following sections will assess how the materials on the North Caucasus assembled in the imperial palace of Constantinople in the mid-tenth century reflected the ideological imperatives, practical policy considerations and more purely 'academic' interests of members of the government and the scholars who put the texts together.

The extent to which our information on Byzantine approaches to the Alans and the North Caucasus comes filtered through the imperial palace of the mid-tenth century can be illustrated by a brief survey of the information in texts collected by, commissioned by, or attributed to Constantine VII.[664] The Alans appear in *DAI* as potential allies against the Khazars (*DAI*, ch. 10, 11), as neighbours of the Pechenegs (*DAI*, ch.37) and, in a geographical survey of the Black Sea coast, as a threat to the Zikhians living on the other side of the mountain passes from them (*DAI*, ch.

[659] *DAI*, ch. 13, p. 72.
[660] *DAI,* ch. 13, pp. 70–4; cf. §2.3 above.
[661] O. Kresten and A.E. Müller, *Samtherrschaft. Legitimationsprinzip und kaiserlicher Urkundentitel in Byznz in der ersten Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna, 1995), pp. 18–20, 24–5, 30–3, 37.
[662] J. Shepard, 'Constantine VII's Doctrine of "Containment" of the Rus', in B.N. Floria and S.A. Ivanov (eds.), *Gennadios: k 70-letiiu akad. G.G. Litavrina* (Moscow, 1999), p. 264.
[663] T. Lounghis, *Kōnstantinou Z' Porphyrogennētou.* De administrando imperio. *(Pros ton idiom huion Rhōmanon). Mia methodos anagnōsis* (Thessaloniki, 1990), pp. 36–9, 50–3.
[664] For a minimalist assessment of Constantine VII's personal involvement, see: I. Ševčenko, 'Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus', in Shepard and Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, pp. 167–95.

42).[665] James Howard-Johnston has argued that chapters 37 and 42 largely comprise earlier material drawn up in the time of Leo VI; it may be significant that it is only in the opening section of *DAI* (which reflects *realia* and concerns of the time of composition, ca. 948–52) that the Alans are mentioned with their ruler, the *exousiokratōr*.[666] There is also an excerpt from the chronicle of Theophanes, which mentions the role played by the Alan migrations of the fifth century in the account of the fall of the western Roman empire (*DAI*, ch. 25).[667]

Exousiokratōr is the title given to the ruler of Alania in *De ceremoniis*, Book II, chapter 48. This appears in a list of diplomatic formulae for addressing the dignitaries of the Caucasus, after the *kouropalatēs* of Iberia, and four other *archontes* of Iberia, and before the *exousiastēs* of Abasgia. Like the Iberian *kouropalatēs* and the Abasgian *exousiastēs*, the ruler of Alania can expect to receive a two *solidi* chrysobull. The formula is as follows:

> Εἰς τὸν ἐξουσιοκράτορα Ἀλανίας, βούλλα χρυςῆ δισολδία.
> «Εν ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ μόνου ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν. Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ Ῥωμανός, πιστοὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ Θεῷ βασιλεῖς Ῥωμαίων, πρὸς ὁ δεῖνα τὸν ἐξουσιαστὴν Ἀλανίας καὶ πνευματικὸν ἡμῶν τέκνον.»
>
> To the *exousiokratōr* of Alania, a two-solidi chrysobull.
> 'In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, our One True God, Constantine [VII] and Romanos [II], Believers in this God, Emperors of the Romans, to Such-and-Such, the *exousiastēs* of Alania and Our Spiritual Son.'[668]

The issuing of the chrysobull by Constantine VII and Romanos II indicates this passage can be dated after Romanos had been made co-emperor, probably in Easter 946, and before Constantine's death in 959. (Zuckerman dates the whole list to 946 or very shortly after.)[669] The

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[665] *DAI,* ch. 10, 11, 37, 42; pp. 62–4, 168, 186–8.
[666] J. Howard-Johnston, 'The *De Administrando Imperio: A Re-Examination of the Text and a Re-Evaluation of Its Evidence About the Rus',* in M. Kazanski, A. Nercessian and C. Zuckerman (eds.) *Les centres proto-urbains russes entre Scandinavie, Byzance et Orient* (Paris, 2000), pp. 301–36; but see E. Mel'nikova, '*Rhosia* and the Rus in Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos' *De administrando imperio*', in F. Androshchuk, J. Shepard and M. White (eds.), *Byzantium and the Viking World* (Uppsala, 2016), pp. 315–36 on the presence of mid-tenth century material in chapter 42 of *DAI.*
[667] *DAI,* ch. 25, pp. 104–5; cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia,* ed. de Boor, p. 94; however, there is no attempt here to link the Alans who crossed the Rhine with the people of the contemporary North Caucasus.
[668] *De ceremoniis,* ii, ch. 48, p. 686.
[669] C. Zuckerman, 'Le voyage d'Olga et la première ambassade espagnole à Constantinople en 946', *TM*, 13 (2000), pp. 669–72.

title of *exousiokratōr* is attested for Alan rulers on lead seals from the early eleventh century; the discovery of the inscription in the Senty Church now provides a local attestation of this title for 965 CE.[670] Meanwhile, the address to the *exousiokratōr* as the Emperor's 'spiritual son', a form also used for the *archōn* of Bulgaria and the *archōn* of *archōntes* of Great Armenia, indicates that the Alan ruler was once again viewed as Christian, possibly by 946, or at least by 959.[671]

Alania is mentioned a second time in *De cerem.* II.48, in the context of a list of nine *archontes* of the eastern Caucasus. The text here appears to contain a grammatical mistake:

> εἰς τὸν ἄρχοντα [sg.] τοῦ Σαρβᾶν, οἵτινες [pl.] κεῖνται μέσον Ἀλανίας καὶ Τζαναρίας·
> εἰς τοὺς ἄρχοντας Ἀζίας [f.], ἐν ᾧ [m./n.] εἰσιν αἱ Κασπεῖαι πύλαι·[672]

Constantine Zuckerman has suggested the following correction, based on the assumption that a marginal note was accidentally recopied into the wrong line:

> εἰς τὸν ἄρχοντα τοῦ Σαρβᾶν·
> εἰς τοὺς ἄρχοντας Ἀζίας, οἵτινες κεῖνται μέσον Ἀλανίας καὶ Τζαναρίας, ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν αἱ Κασπεῖαι πύλαι·
>
> To the *archōn* of Sarban;
> To the *archontes* of Azia, who are between Alania and Tzanaria, where are located the Caspian Gates.[673]

The Alans appear several times in the Constantinian *Excerpta.* The most valuable set of references are derived from the *History* of Menander the Guardsman, which does not survive except through these excerpts.[674] The content of the fragments from Menander have been discussed before in this thesis; here, it is worth emphasising that they were being read, excerpted and copied in the

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[670] + ΓΑ-RPIḢΛ ΕΞϑCIOK[PA]-TOP ΑΛΑ-NIAC: dated to 1030s/40s: W. Seibt, 'Metropoliten und Herrscher der Alanen auf byzantinischen Siegeln des 10.-12. Jahrhunderts,' in *Sfragistika i istoriia kul'tury. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov, posviashchennyi iubileiu V.S. Shandrovskoi* (St. Petersburg, 2004), p. 54; G. Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'Empire Byzantine* (Paris, 1884), pp. 429–31; Senty inscription: see pp. **XX** below.
[671] *De ceremoniis*, ii, ch. 48, pp. 687, 690; Martin-Hisard, 'Les archontes', pp. 421–2, 466.
[672] *De ceremoniis,* ii, ch.48, p. 688.
[673] C. Zuckerman, 'À propos du *Livre des cérémonies*, II, 48', *TM*, 13 (2000), p. 535.
[674] *De legationibus*, ed. de Boor, pp. 180, 206, 442, 453–4, 463; cf. Menander, *History*, ed. Blockley, fr. 6.1, 19.1, 5.1, 10.5, 18.5, pp. 70, 174–6, 48, 126, 162–4.

imperial palace in the mid-tenth century. One of the excerpts is taken from Menander's account of the negotiations between the Persians and Romans in 561 at Dara, where it was stipulated that the 'Persians, Huns, Alans or other barbarians' should not be allowed to pass through the Chor Pass or the Caspian Gates in order to attack the dominions of the Romans.[675] In *DAI*, words attributed to Peter the Patrician by Menander elsewhere in the same passage, are put into the mouth of a ninth-century emir of Bari: the source is evidently used for its εὐφραδεία, rather than its historical information here. Nonetheless, this is evidence that the cross-referenced *Excerpta*, in general, and at least one of the passages referring to the Alans, in particular, were informing other writings in the palace.[676] Other excerpts discussed the possibility that the Romans, or their enemies, might be able to use material incentives to persuade the Alans to carry out, or desist from, raids through the Caucasian passes: incited by Tiberius against Artabanus of Parthia in 35 CE (Josephus), by Pharasmanes of Iberia against Albania, Media, Armenia and Cappadocia in 135 CE (Cassius Dio), or by Goubazes II of Lazica against Iberia before 548 CE (Procopius).[677]

Finally, the Alans appear in a list of peoples forming the barbarian army of Thomas the Slav (ca. 821), as reported by Joseph Genesios, in his history dedicated to, and commissioned by, Constantine VII:

> Having thus made a treaty with the Agarenoi, with concurrence of their leader he was crowned Emperor by the Patriarch Job of Antioch. He assembled his famous army, which was composed of Agarenoi, Indians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, Abasians, Zichians, Iberians, Kabeirians, Slavs, Huns, Vandals, Getai, and all those who had partaken of the abomination of Mani, as well as Lazoi, Alans, Chaldians, Armenians, and other peoples of all sorts, and he took control of the entire east.[678]

The corresponding passage in Theophanes Continuatus provided a slightly different list: 'not only

[675] *De legationibus*, ed. de Boor, p. 180; cf. Menander, *History*, ed. Blockley, fr. 6.1, p.70.
[676] *DAI,* ch. 29, pp. 128–9; cf. Menander, *History,* ed. Blockley, 6.1, lines 214–36, pp. 64–6; Németh, 'Imperial Systematization', p. 59.
[677] *De legationibus,* ed. de Boor, pp. 78–9, 88, 497; Alemany, *Sources*, pp. 90–1, 84–5, 196.
[678] Genesios, *Regum libri quattuor,* ii, ch. 2, ed. A. Lesmüller-Werner and H. Thurn (Berlin, 1978), p. 24; tr. A. Kaldellis (Canberra, 1998), pp. 29–30.

Hagarenes, our neighbours on the borders, but also those dwelling further, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Iberians, Zechians, Kabeirans and all those who followed the doctrines and decrees of Manes.'[679] While it is clear that Genesios's list in particular is including an exotic range of peoples for effect, Signes Codoñer draws attention to the number of peoples from the northwestern Caucasus in these lists, and the hegemony that the Khazars exercised over many of them in the early ninth century. This enables him to suggest Khazar backing for the revolt of Thomas the Slav.[680]

The data just summarised represent the sum of the known references to the Alans in the surviving works commissioned by or attributed to Constantine VII. Through Menander, those working in the palace had access to an account of Zemarkhos' travels through Alan territories in the sixth century. The research conducted by the team producing the *Excerpta* led them to a number of references to the potential for Alan raiding through the Caucasus passes, from the first to sixth centuries. Genesios included them in a list of peoples, many of whom were from the northwestern Caucasus and then under Khazar hegemony, recruited to the army of Thomas the Slav. In the sections of *DAI* datable to Constantine's own time, however, the Alans are presented as potential allies against the Khazars. *De ceremoniis* provides a formula suggesting the return of the Alan ruler to Christianity between the expulsion of the Byzantine bishop(s) and clergy in 932 and the time of the list's composition, by 959 at the latest; probably shortly after 946.

[679] Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographiae Libri I–IV*, ii, ch. 12, ed. and tr. Featherstone and Codoñer, p. 82.
[680] Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 45–52.

5.6. Strategic geography, strategic resources

The Alans are placed within a wider strategic geography of the Black Sea region by *DAI*. *DAI* returns again and again to the theme of Greek fire, producing arguments for maintaining the state secret (chapter 13), the origins of the secret (chapter 48), the location of naphtha wells along the northern and eastern Black Sea coastline (chapter 53), and the distances and itineraries required to reach those locations (chapter 42); the 'coded and deliberate' process of selection is illustrative of the method of composition of the text as a whole.[681] The significance of this technology rested not only on its direct functionality or the spectacular consequences of its application, but also on the imperial claim to its exclusive control.[682] The designation of 'strategic importance' justified the dedication of military and financial resources for policing, and (unintentionally) created correspondingly greater potential rewards for those able to evade policing.

DAI places the Alans in relationship to the Khazars, the Zikhs, and the inhabitants of Cherson and the *klimata* ('regions'). In chapter 42, they are mentioned in connection with their ability to raid across the mountains, forcing the Zikhs to take refuge on islands off the coast.[683] Part of the relevance of this information to the imperial authorities is indicated by the detailed description of the naphtha wells in Zikhia (between the Kerch' straits and Abkhazia) in chapter 53 of *DAI*.[684] There is no evidence that the Byzantine authorities had any permanent military presence in this part of the eastern Black Sea coastline, either at the turn of the tenth century when the main body of chapter 42 may have been composed, or in the mid-tenth century when *DAI* was

[681] Magdalino, 'Historical Geography', p. 35; see §2.7 above.
[682] Liudprand describes the terror inspired in the Rus' raiders of 941 when the Byzantines used their rapidly assembled warships with Greek fire-throwers against them. The passage is interpolated into an account of how Romanos I Lekapenos sent ships equipped with Greek fire to aid Hugh of Arles against the Muslim raiding base at Fraxinetum: Liudprand is emphasising that the Byzantines shared their precious technology, along with gifts and the promise of a marriage alliance, with the king of Italy: Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, v, ch. 14–16; cf. iii, ch. 25, ed. P. Chiesa (Turnhout, 1998), pp. 130–2, 78–9;.
[683] *DAI*, ch. 42, p. 188.
[684] *DAI*, ch. 53, p. 284.

compiled. Naphtha would, therefore, have had to be imported into the empire from the region. It appears the Byzantine authorities had difficulty establishing formal relations with the Zikhs during this period: the list of Caucasian dignatories in *De ceremoniis* does not include the Zikhs, while Epiphanios of Kallistratou regarded the Zikhs as pagans.[685] Al-Mas'ūdī confirms the evidence of the Byzantine sources, reporting that the Kashak, who live between al-Qabkh and the sea of al-Rūm do not have kings, take refuge from the Alans in their forts (*qilā'*) along the coast, and belong to the religion of the *majūs*: possibly reflecting the use of cremation burial rituals, which are archaeologically attested for the inhabitants of the region during the period in question.[686] Significantly, he also discusses the trade between the Kashak and Trebizond, with ships travelling in both directions. Textiles were important import and export products for the Kashaks, who would have had access to the markets of the Muslim world as well as the Byzantine market in Trebizond.[687] Pitchers of naphtha, to which al-Mas'ūdī makes no reference, may have formed another, more tightly regulated, part of this trade.[688]

The relationship between the 'strategic interests' of the Byzantine state, for instance in the naphtha reserves of the northern and eastern Black Sea region, or in controlling the access of Rus' pirates to the Black Sea through the Kerch' straits, and the commercial interests of both imperial and non-imperial agents is indicated in chapter 6 of *DAI*. The latter describes trade between Chersonites and Pechenegs side by side with the establishment of contracts to perform services

[685] *De ceremoniis*, ii, ch. 48, pp. 686–8; *DAI* differentiates between the territories of *Zichia*, *Papagia* and *Kasachia*, locating the latter closest to the mountains and the Alans, but only refers to the people of the *Zichoi*; meanwhile, al-Mas'ūdī only refers to *al-Kashak*; both seem to be grouping the different Circassian/Adyghean peoples of the North-West Caucasus together: *DAI,* ch. 42, pp. 182, 186–8; Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, pp. 3, 45–6; see §4.4 above.

[686] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, pp. 45–6; on *majūs*, cf: Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 157 n. 4; cremation rituals: P.S. Uspenskii, 'Nekotorye itogi i perspektivy izucheniia krematsionnykh pogrebenii severno-zapdnogo Kavkaza VIII–XIII vv.', *KSIA*, 226 (2012), pp. 188–96.

[687] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, pp. 3, 45–6.

[688] Muslim geographers and historians make no reference to the naphtha reserves of the Black Sea region, unlike those of the Caspian, which may indicate that the Byzantines did manage to maintain a degree of secrecy concerning their location: Naumenko, 'O bosporskoi nefti', p. 206; further references: see §2.6 above.

for them and for the emperor 'in Rus', Khazaria, Zikhia and all the places beyond'.[689] Good relations with individual groups of Pechenegs could provide either the imperial authorities or the Chersonites (whose interests were not identical) with access to resources, people and information from the Caucasus Mountains in the south to the forest-steppe zone in the north.[690] Implied, but not stated, is that Pecheneg recruitment depended on the *pax Khazarica*: while Pechenegs are envisaged as possible allies against the Rus' (chapters 2, 4, 8), the Magyars (chapters 3, 4, 8, 13) and the Bulgars (chapters 5, 8), they are never mentioned as potential allies against the Khazars – unlike the Alans (chapters 10, 11), Oghuz (chapter 10) and 'Black Bulgars' (chapter 12). Meanwhile, soured relations with the Pechenegs are envisaged in equivalent terms to bad relations with the Khazars: raids on Cherson and the Klimata by the Pechenegs (chapter 1); recruitment of Oghuz against them by the Byzantines (chapter 9).

Alan recruitment is presented differently. Chapter 11 of *DAI* indicates how the Alans could help the Byzantine authorities to ensure access to the Kerch' straits, by ambushing Khazar armies if they attempted to attack Cherson and the *klimata.*[691] As we saw earlier, the reference to *klimata* in chapters 10 and 11 of *DAI* appears to refer to an assemblage of Khazar-controlled territories in the North Caucasus as well as the Crimea.[692] The Alans are referred to by their ruler, the *exousiokratōr*, rather than as an amorphous people, or as individual groups, contracted for specific services.[693] There is no reference to payment, but instead to the ruler's 'friendship for the

[689] *DAI*, ch. 6, p. 52.
[690] The form of address to the Pechenegs (Patzinaks) in *De ceremoniis* is to multiple chiefs, rathen than to a single ruler: εἰς τοὺς ἄρχοντας τῶν Πατσινακίτων: *De ceremoniis*, ii, ch. 48, p. 691.
[691] The title of the chapter specifically refers to τοῦ κάστρου Βοσπόρου: *DAI*, ch. 11, p. 64; on the relationship of chapter headings and marginal comments in MS Parisinus gr. 2009 to the main text: *DAI*, i, pp. 19–21; J.H. Bury, 'The Treastise *De aministrando imperio*', *BZ*, 15:3–4 (1906), p. 519–22.
[692] Constantine VII links Cherson with the *klimata* of Cimmerian Bosporos in *De thematibus:* οἱ τοῦ Βοσπόρου κρατοῦντες ἐκράτουν καὶ Χερσῶνος αὐτῆς καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν κλιμάτων, ὥστε καὶ βασιλεύειν τοὺς ε'ν τῷ Βοσπόρῳ κατοικοῦντας λέγεται: Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De thematibus*, ii, ch. 12, ed. A. Pertusi (Rome, 1952), pp. 98–100; cf. *DAI,* ch. 53, pp. 258–84; on the Byzantine *theme* of the *klimata*, see below; see also §3.6 above.
[693] *DAI*, ch. 10, line 4, p. 62; ch. 11, lines 3, 9, p. 64: ὁ ἐξουσιοκράτωρ Ἀλανίας; ch. 10, line 6, p. 64: ὁ Ἀλανός.

emperor of the Romans' (τὴν φιλίαν τοῦ βασιλέως Ῥωμαίων).[694] The previous chapter illustrated that the Alans were remunerated for their services to the Byzantines, indeed with the very goods described as typical payment to the Pechenegs ('pieces of purple cloth, ribbons, loosely woven cloths, gold brocade, pepper, scarlet or "Parthian" leather'), and the *Excerpta* are full of references to Alans as mercenaries; but the advice given by *DAI* is to treat this relationship as a diplomatic alliance, rather than a purely contractual arrangement.[695]

The interest of the court in finding allies with whom it could establish formal relations was shaped by its attitude to the Greek-speaking populations of the northern Black Sea region. While chapter 10 speaks of the security of Cherson, other sections of *DAI* make clear that the court did not believe the city's 'leading men and officials' could be relied upon not to pursue their own interests, or make their own accommodations with the Khazars.[696] The details on the naphtha resources of Zikhia in chapter 53 are placed between an extended anecdote demonstrating the unreliability of the Chersonites, and a series of instructions about how Cherson could be disciplined by starving it of essential grain supplies from Paphlagonia, and of access to Byzantine markets for the hides and wax they obtained by trade from the Pechenegs.[697] Both *DAI* and the continuation of the *Chronicle* of Theophanes commissioned by Constantine VII report a reorganisation of the Byzantine administration in Cherson, following immediately from an imperial mission to the Lower Don River, in Khazaria.[698] According to the report, the *chagan* and *pech* of Khazaria had requested aid from the Byzantines in the construction of the fort of Sarkel,

[694] *DAI,* ch. 11, lines 4–5, p. 62.
[695] *DAI*, ch. 6, lines 8–9, p. 52; cf. §4.3 above; references in the *Excerpta*: see §5.5 above.
[696] πρωτεύουσί τε καὶ ἄρχουσι: *DAI*, ch. 42, p. 184.
[697] Ἄβαλε λοιπὸν τῷ πιστεύοντι Χερσωνίτῃ πολίτῃ: *DAI*, ch. 53, pp. 284, 286.
[698] *DAI*, ch. 42, pp. 182–4; Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographiae Libri I–IV*, iii, ch. 28, ed. Featherstone and Codoñer, pp. 176–8; Codoñer argues the two accounts draw on a common source: Codoñer, *Theophilos and the East*, pp. 338–42; in any case, the replication of the material suggests the particular significance of the region and the episode for the imperial authorities in the mid-tenth century.

during the reign of the Emperor Theophilos (r. 829–42), probably in the aftermath of the fall of Amorion in 838.[699]

The accounts in *DAI* and Theophanes Continuatus emphasise the direct sponsorship from the Byzantine imperial court of the building project on the Lower Don. Petronas Kamateros, whose title of *spatharokandidatos* indicated personal service to the emperor, was sent to Cherson with an impressive display of warships (*khelandia*) from the imperial fleet and the fleet of the maritime *katepanate* of Paphlagonia.[700] The onward journey was made on transport ships, better adapted to the passage up the Don: in *DAI,* these are referred to as *kamatera karabia*, a play on Petronas's own name (καματηρός, literally 'toilsome', 'burdensone'), which may also suggest an association with slave labour.[701] The reports stress Petronas's engineering expertise, implying that Petronas was responsible for the introduction of brick-making technology on the Lower Don, and his loyalty to the imperial court: on the conclusion of his mission, he warned the emperor that he should appoint the governors of Cherson directly. Petronas himself was accordingly awarded with

[699] The reference to the Qağan (χαγάνος) and the Beg (πὲχ) mirrors reports of dual kingship among the Khazars in Arabic sources. Effective power seems to have rested with the (Qağan-) Beg, while the Great Qağan was sacralised; references and commentary: P.B. Golden, 'Irano-Turcica: The Khazar Sacral Kingship Revisited', *AOASH*, 60.2 (1997), pp. 161–94; B. Zhivkov, *Khazaria in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,* trans. D. Manova. (Leiden, 2015), pp. 47–65. The name of Sarkel is glossed as ἄσπρον ὀσπίτιον in *DAI* (ch. 42, line 24) and λευκὸν οἴκημα in Theophanes Continuatus (iii, 28, line 6), both translating as 'white house'; the name is attested (*Š.r.kīl*) in Hebrew in the Reply of the Khazar 'king' Joseph: P.K. Kokovtsov, *Evreisko-khazarskaia perepiska v X veke* (Leningrad, 1932), pp. 31, 102; Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 239–43. On the date of the mission: J. Shepard, 'Trouble-shooters and Men-on-the-spot: the Emperor's Dealings with Outsiders', in *Le relazioni internazionali nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 2011), pp. 698–703; C. Zuckerman, 'Two Notes on the early History of the *thema* of Cherson', *BMGS*, 21 (1997), pp. 210–22; Codoñer's re-dating to ca. 831 is less convincing: Codoñer, *Theophilos and the East,* pp. 337–45.

[700] *DAI,* ch. 42, pp. 182–4; μακρὰς νῆας: Theophanes Continuatus, iii, ch. 28, lines 13–15, ed. Featherstone and Codoñer, pp. 176–7. σπαθαροκανδιδᾶτος: Uspenskii Taktikon (842–3): Darrouzès (ed.), *Les Listes*, pp. 53, 55, 297. Codoñer suggests a connection between Petronas and the empress Theodora's Paphlagonian family network, which apparently had significant mercantile interests in the Black Sea region, affecting the grain supply for both Constantinople and Cherson: Codoñer, *Theophilos and the East*, pp. 74–7, 111–14 (cf. §§1.5, 4.4); however, there is no direct evidence linking Petronas personally to Paphlagonia: *PmbZ* #5927; probably not the brother-in-law of Theophilos: *PmbZ* #5929; the point of the accounts in *DAI* and Theophanes Continuatus is that Petronas owed his position to his connections to the central administration, not local networks: Shepard, 'Trouble-shooters', p. 702 n. 35.

[701] 'Petronas "the slave driver" would be fitting translating for the nickname': Zuckerman, 'Two Notes', p. 213 n. 15; cf. *LBG,* q.v. καματηρός; καματερὰ καράβια: *DAI*, ch. 42, lines 33–4; cf. στρογγύλαι ('round ships'): Theophanes Continuatus, iii, ch. 28, lines 13–15, ed. Featherstone and Codoñer, p. 176; used elsewhere to refer to transport ships: στρογγύλας σιταγωγοὺς […] καὶ ἱππαγωγοὺς: id., ii, ch. 13, lines 6–8, p. 84.

the job, as well as a more senior court title (and higher salary) as *protospatharios.*[702] The list of dignatories known as the Uspenskii Taktikon (842–3) mentions the *stratēgos* of the *Klimata*, which appears to reflect the initial outcome of the reform.[703]

There is evidence for Byzantine influence at many Khazar forts on both the Lower and Middle Don, and not simply at the Left-Bank Tsimliansk fort, with which Sarkel is usually identified (Map VI).[704] The measurements and layout of the forts indicate knowledge of Byzantine metrology and military architecture, and brick-making techniques.[705] Earlier generations of archaeologists tended to minimise the Byzantine influence excessively.[706] However, there is no reason why the imperially sanctioned mission of Petronas need be the only means by which Byzantine metrology and models, could have been obtained by the Khazars.[707] An earlier ninth-century dating for several of the substantial Don fortresses has been suggested, including the fired-brick fortification at Semikarakory.[708] The relevant expertise would have been available within the urban centres of

[702] πρωτοσπαθάριος: cf. §4.3 above.
[703] Darrouzès (ed.), *Les Listes*, pp. 49 (ὁ πατρίκιος καὶ στρατηγὸς τῶν Κλιμάτων), 57 (οἱ ἄρχοντες <Χερ>σῶνος), 353 (comm.); the list of Philotheos (899 CE) simply refers to the *stratēgos* of Cherson (id., p. 101).
[704] Sarkel as the Left-Bank Tsimliansk: Artamanov, *Istoriia Khazar*, p.306; Pletneva, *Sarkel i 'shelkovyi' put'*, pp. 4–5; id., *Drevnerusskii gorod v kochevoi stepi* (Voronezh, 2006), pp. 3–11; V.S. Flerov, 'Semikarakory: bashnia na severnoi stene i otnostil'enaia khronologiia nizhne-donskikh khazarskikh gorodishch', *RA* (2016), 2, pp. 48–62; Afanas'ev has identified Sarkel with the Semikarakory fort instead: G.E. Afanas'ev, 'Kto zhe v deistvitel'nosti postroil Levoberezhnoe Tsimlianskoe gorodishche?', *RA* (2011), 3, p. 110. Other forts on the Tikhaia Sosna river (right tributary of the Middle Don): Upper Ol'shan, Maiaki, Mukhouderov, Koltunov, Alekseev, Krasnoe; on the Severskii Donets (major tributary of the Lower Don): Upper Saltov fort; on the Lower Don: Left-Bank and Right-Bank Tsimliansk, Kamyshov, Semikarkory and (possibly) Krym-1: see Type-2 fortresses in Table 1: G.E. Afanas'ev, 'O samoidentifikatsii khazarskogo kaganata v IX v. (po dannym sistemy oborony)', *KSIA*, 238 (2015), pp. 102–3.
[705] Use of measurements based on the Byzantine foot for overall layout and for building materials: Afanas'ev, 'Kto zhe v deistvitel'nosti', *RA* (2011) 3, pp. 112–13; id. 'O stroitel'nom materiale i metrologii khazaro-alanskikh gorodishch basseina Dona', *Povolzhskaia arkheologiia*, 2 (2012), pp. 38–42, 44.
[706] e.g. Artamanov, *Istoriia Khazar*, pp. 308–9; S.A. Pletneva, 'Khazary i khazarskii kaganat', in Petrukhin *et al*. (eds.), *Khazary*, p. 19.
[707] Afanas'ev compares the Don fortresses to sixth-century Byzantine North African and Levantine fortresses; however, the influence of the latter on Islamic architecture (acknowledged by Afanas'ev) is a case in point: both the buildings themselves and the expertise of the local population were available to the Muslim rulers, without any need for Constantinopolitan mediation: Afanas'ev, 'Kto zhe v deistvitel'nosti postroil', pp. 113–18; D. Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2001), pp. 166–7.
[708] Dating of (fired-brick) fortress of Semikarakory, dependent on evidence for its synchronicity with the stone Righ-bank Tsimliansk fortress (dated by coin finds): Flerov, 'Semikarakory', p. 60; V.S. Flerov, 'Pravoberezhnaia Tsimlianksaia krepost' (problem planigrafii i stratigrafii)', *RA* (1996), 1, pp. 111–13, *contra*: S.A. Pletneva, 'Istoriia odnogo khazarskogo poseleniia', *SA* (1993), 2, pp. 48–69. A C^{14} dating corresponding

the Crimea and the Taman' peninsula, where the populations had long lived either under direct political control of the Khazars or in close contact with them.[709] Petronas's mission, and the report circulated about it, may have been an attempt to demonstrate the superiority of imperial over local craftsmanship.

No equivalent narrative exists for Byzantine building activity in the North Caucasus, but a site that has invited comparison with the Don fortresses is the Khumara fortress in the Upper Kuban valley (Maps I, VII).[710] However, Khumara is on an altogether different scale, occupying an area of around 40 ha, surrounded by well-cut stone walls with a total length of over 2100 m and between 3.5 and 5.1 m thick and with 17 towers so far identified.[711] This dwarfs the size of the Don fortresses, and even approaches that of the Bulgar city of Pliska (48 ha).[712] The fortress is located on a plateau above the right bank of the Kuban', controlling the passage via the Teberda River to the Klukhor pass into Abkhazia, and via the Gum-bashi pass towards the Kislovodsk Basin.[713] The fortress, whose planning follows the relief of the plateau, is dominated by a citadel on top of a mound-shaped hill; it appears the latter was once paved.[714] Comparisons with Don fortresses such as Right-bank Tsimliansk and Maiaki were partly based on the double layers of well-cut stone blocks, the use of limestone binding mortar over joins and the construction of the walls

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to construction ca. 809–91 CE has been found for Maiaki fort, while ca. 767–847 CE has been found for Aleekseev fort, where fired bricks were also used for its construction: G.E. Afanas'ev, 'Alekseevskoe gorodishche kak pamiatnik saltovo-maiatskoi kul'tury', *KSIA*, 239 (2015), pp. 351–2.

[709] Cluster analysis showed fired and unfired bricks from the Lower Don fortresses corresponded to types typical of Cherson (group 'A'), while those from Tikhaia Sosna corresponded to types typical of the Taman' peninsula (group 'B'): 'O stroitel'nom materiale', pp. 35–8.

[710] Khumara has not yet received the wider attention it deserves: 'A paradox. While Itil, which has not yet (or only just?) been discovered, is constantly discussed by historians and archaeoligists, an excellently preserved monument – Khumara fortress – is mentioned relatively rarely': V.S. Flerov, *"Goroda" i "zamki" Khazarskogo kaganata: arkheologicheskaia real'nost'* (Moscow, 2011), p. 120; on Samosdelka in the Lower Volga, which some archaeologists have linked with Itil, see id., pp. 107–19 (with bibliography); Afanas'ev's position, relocating the heartland of the Khazar Qaghanate from the Volga to the Don is extreme: Afanas'ev, 'O samoidentifikatsii', pp. 106–7.

[711] Kh.Kh. Bidzhiev, *Khumarinskoe gorodishche* (Cherkessk, 1983), pp. 16–20; U.Iu. Kochkarov, 'Ukreplennye poseleniia Khazarskogo kaganata', *Vestnik RGNF*, 2(67) (2012), p. 60.

[712] Sarkel (Left-bank Tsimliansk): ca. 2.3 ha; Semikarakory: ca. 4.3 ha; Maiaki: ca. 0.76 ha: Zhivkov, *Khazaria*, p. 203 n. 138; Afanas'ev, 'O stroitel'nom materiale', p. 31; id., 'Kto zhe', p. 8.

[713] Bidzhiev, *Khumarinskoe*, p. 20; Kochkarov, 'Ukreplennye poseleniia', p. 60.

[714] Much of the surface of the plateau had been ploughed up the early 1960s: N.E. Talitskii, 'Ocherki Karachaia', *SMOMPK*, 40 (1909), p. 7; IA (RAN) R-1. 2689a (Alekseeva, 1963).

directly onto the bedrock.[715] Perhaps more strikingly, at both the Don fortresses and Khumara, a significant number of runic inscriptions and tamga-like marks have been found on the walls and building materials.[716]

A detailed stratigraphy of Khumara has not been published. Khanufii Bidzhiev distinguished between three cultural layers, broadly dated between the eighth and sixth centuries BCE, the second and seventh centuries CE and the eighth and tenth centuries CE, and linked the construction of the walls with the last phase.[717] Murtazali Gadzhiev has recently drawn attention to evidence from Bidzhiev's own excavations indicating the eighth- to tenth-century cultural layer covered a layer of lime, crushed stone and building blocks, suggesting an earlier construction of parts of the fortress.[718] Gadzhiev, who also compares the tamga-marks from Khumara, the Don fortresses and Derbent, links Khumara with sixth-century Sasanian building works.[719] Pending a more detailed stratigraphy, it is nonetheless clear that the site was intensively occupied for a period between the eighth and tenth centuries.[720] As at many of the Don sites, the ceramic finds included not only significant quantities of wheel-turned Saltov pitchers, but also red clay amphorae, particularly in the citadel.[721] As we have seen, these indicate links to Byzantine commercial centres on the Black Sea. Fragments of ninth- to tenth-century amphorae were found along with animal bones showing traces of burning in what has been interpreted as a fire temple,

[715] Bidzhiev, *Khumarinskoe*, pp. 32–3.
[716] V.A. Kuznetsov, 'Nadpisi Khumarinskogo gorodishcha', *SA* (1963), 1, pp. 298–305; a recent reading of some of the Turkic inscriptions at Khumara names Öd Tegin as the builder of the fortress, and refers to the *asman (As?/Alans?); I lack the expertise to evaluate these readings, or the readings of the inscriptions from the Maiaki fort: G. Hosszú, *The Heritage of Scribes. The Relation of Rovas Scripts to Eurasian Writing Systems* (Budapest, 2013), pp. 175–84.
[717] Bidzhiev, *Khumarinskoe*, pp. 14–15; Kh.Kh. Bidzhiev and A.B. Gadlo, ''Raskopki Khumarinskogo gorodishcha v 1974 godu', in *Arkheologiia i etnografiia Karachaevo-Cherkesii* (Cherkessk, 1979), pp. 37–8; E.P. Alekseeva, *Arkheologicheskie pamiatniki Karachaevo-Cherkesii* (Moscow, 1992), pp. 108–9, where she accepted Bidhziev and Gadlo's revision to her earlier dating of the site: cf. IA (RAN) R-1. 2689a.
[718] M.S. Gadzhiev, 'Khumara: nekotorye stroitel'nye paralleli i problema datirovki ukreplenii', in Kozenkova (ed.), *Ocherki*, p. 56.
[719] Gadzhiev, 'Khumara', pp. 51–65; see §§2.3, 2.5 and 4.3.
[720] New investigations of the site began in 2007, under the direction of Umar Kochkarov: Kochkarov, 'Ukreplennye poseleniia', p. 61.
[721] Bidzhiev, *Khumarinskoe*, pp. 64–77; Kochkarov, 'Ukreplennye poseleniia', p. 63.

located at the base of the citadel.[722] Evidence for a smithy between the citadel and main-gates merits comparison with the smithies incorporated into the fortifications at Right-bank Tsimliansk and Semikarakory.[723] Caltrops similar in design to those used by the Byzantines have been found in the same cultural layer.[724]

It is not necessary to assume that the construction, or reconstruction of the Khumara fortress in the Khazar period was the result of the direct involvement of a centrally-sent Byzantine mission, equivalent to that of Petronas Kamateros to the Middle Don.[725] The links with Byzantine material culture, the material culture of the Turkic peoples of the steppe and, perhaps, elements of the post-Sasanian traditions of the south Caucasus, reflect the access the Khazars had to the craftsmen of several different regions. If the construction of the main fortifications at Khumara is indeed datable to the eighth or ninth centuries, it would indicate they were also able to put formidable reserves of local labour to work. We saw in chapter three that the settlement pattern of the Kislovodsk Basin was transformed in the same period, with a new elite establishing itself at sites such as Ukazatel', Gornoe Ekho and Ullundorbunla. There it was argued that the mass emigration of the Alans to the Middle Don did not need to be invoked to explain the change; but it is clear that the structure of Alan society was radically altered, with old cemeteries abandoned, old layouts of major sites destroyed, and at least some members of the new elite chosing to live in yurt structures (also found at Khumara) rather than the traditional stone buildings of the preceding period.[726]

[722] Gadzhiev and Gadlo, 'Raskopki', pp. 38–41.
[723] Bidzhiev, *Khumarinskoe*, pp. 79–81; Flerov, 'Semikarakory: bashnia', pp. 52–3.
[724] Bidzhiev, *Khumarinskoe*, p. 25; cf. advice on the use of τρίβολοι in a Byzantine military treatise possibly dated to the ninth century: *Peri stratēgias*, ch. 6, 17, 29, 32, 38, 39, ed. G.T. Dennis, *Three Military Treatises* (Washington, 1985), pp. 22, 58, 90, 100, 114, 116.
[725] Malakhov, 'Protospafarii Ivan', pp. 120–3; Afanas'ev, 'Kto zhe', p. 119; cf. §4.3.
[726] See §3.5 above; 'yurts': Bidhziev, *Khumarinskoe*, pp. 36–8.

5.7. Models of authority

In this context, it is hardly surprising that the compilers of *DAI* recognised that Alan loyalty to Byzantium over the Khazars was not automatic, even in the mid-tenth century: *DAI* specifies that the ruler of the Alans can ambush the Khazars 'if he so chooses', and if he is not 'at peace with the Khazars'.[727] The archaeological evidence makes it clear that for all the regional variations, the North Caucasian Alans participated in a political culture that was widely shared across the Khazar Qaghanate.[728] The Alan leader who fought on the side of Nasr and the Abkhazians against the Armenians and other Bagrationi princes of K'artli in the 880s, is described in the Georgian source as a *mt'avari* (a hereditary ruler) and called Baqat'ar.[729] The latter is presented as a proper name in the Georgian source, but even if so, it would reflect an appropriation of the Altaic honorific title *baghatur*, attested in Chinese sources for Inner Asia from the seventh century, and found on Danubian Bulgar stone inscriptions in the ninth century, as well as on a tenth century seal found in Varna.[730] A version of this title (*baghāyīr*) is given for the *malik al-Lān* by Ibn Rusta, who also specifies that 'The *malik al-Lān* is himself [*fī nafsihi*] a Christian, but the majority of the inhabitants of his realm are unbelievers'.[731] The 'Zelenchuk Inscription', found near Nizhnii Arkhyz, reveals that the title continued to be used by Alans as a name (in the form ΠΑΚΑΘΑΡ, read *Bœqatœr*) down to the eleventh or twelfth century.[732]

[727] *DAI,* ch. 10, line 6, p. 62; ch, 11, lines 3–4, p. 62.
[728] cf. §3.4, 3.5 and §4.4 above.
[729] *MK'*, tr. Thomson, pp. 264–5; cf. §5.3 above.
[730] Chinese *mo-ho-to* > *bayatur*; 9th c. Proto-Bulgar: βαγατούρ; 8th-10th c.; Uyghur runic ms.: *bātur*; cf. later Russian богатыр: C. Fleischer, 'Bahādor', *Enc.Ir.*, III, Fasc.4, pp. 436 – 7; D. Sinor. 'Bahādur', *EI*^{2}, pp. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 155–6; Alemany, *Sources*, p. 325; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, ii, pp. 64, 83, 205, 355–6; V. Beshevliev, *Pŭrvobŭlagrski nadpisi*, 2nd edn. (Sofia, 1992), pp. 134, 193–4, 234–5, 238–40, 248–9.
[731] Ibn Rusta, *Kitāb al-'alāq*, p. 148; Göckenjan and Zimonyi, *Berichte*, p. 92, 96; see §5.2 above.
[732] The inscription was found in 1888, and recorded in 1892, but subsequent attempts to find the stone have been unsuccessful, raising questions about authenticity. Nevertheless, concordances between the recorded inscription and the two other surviving examples Alanic writing in Greek script lend support for the inscription's authenticity: L. Zgusta, *The Old Ossetic Inscription from the River Zelenčuk* (Vienna, 1987), pp. 59–60; A. Lubotsky, *Alanic Marginal Notes in a Greek Liturgical Manuscript* (Vienna, 2015), p. 14; cf. §1.1

The title the Byzantines gave to the Alan ruler had to take account of the latter's self-perception in terms of an alternative imperial hierarchy. The title *exousiokratōr* appears to have been specific to the Alans, but its cognate *exousiastēs*, which is also used in the formula for address in *De ceremoniis*, implied a recognition of the holder's independence from direct submission to the Byzantine emperor. The other addressee in *De ceremoniis*, besides the *mep'e* of Abkhazia, for whom it was used, was the Fāṭimid caliph.[733] It appears on a seal of the 830s in the form, 'Theophobos, *exousiastēs* of the Persians': referring, in Codoñer's view, to a Byzantine project for the establishment of an independent principality in Azerbaijan during the Khurramite revolt.[734] The title emphasised the autonomy of its holder, often implying support for the latter's secession from an alternative power, such as that of the Khazar Qaghanate, or the 'Abbāsid caliphate.[735]

An alternative Turkic title, *K.rk.ndāj* (**kär-kündäj*), is recorded for the ruler of the Alans by al-Mas'ūdī.[736] The related title *k.nd.h* (**kündä*) is reported in Ibn Rusta and works of the al-Jayhānī tradition for the Magyar ruler, while it is attested for a third/ninth century governor of Mosul of Khazar origin in the form Isḥāq b. Kundājīq and Kundāj al-Khazar; the prefix *kär-* is attested in forms such as *kär-bugha, kär-balïq.*[737] Al-Mas'ūdī's writing on the North Caucasus and Eastern Europe appears to have drawn in part upon a common source with the Jayhānī tradition, transposing details to different settings. For instance, the account of the 'depressed land' (*al-arḍ al-maḥfūra*), which may originally have described a mountain valley in the Caucasus, became connected with the account of Sallām the interpreter's journey to the wall of Gog and Magog, was connected with the north Black Sea region by al-Mas'ūdī, and was linked to a folk etymology

[733] The 'emir of Africa': *De ceremoniis*, ii, ch. 48, p. 689.
[734] Codoñer, *Theophilos and the East*, pp. 164–72.
[735] cf. §5.3 above on the distinctive Byzantine approach to the Abkhazian kingdom, established with Khazar backing, as opposed to the Georgian and Armenian principalities.
[736] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 42); Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 156.
[737] Ibn Rusta, *Kitāb al-'alāq*, p. 142; I. Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century: the Magyar Chapter of the Jayhani Tradition* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 38–40, 44–5, 50–3, 116–20; Göckenjan and Zimonyi, *Berichte*, pp. 68, 172, 228, 252; Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 156 and n. 1; Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 200–4.

of Magyars and a location in the southern Ural mountains in the Jayhānī tradtion.[738] However, al-Mas'ūdī's information was also drawn from enquiries he made on his own travels. He was unusually ecumenical in the range of people he interviewed, and laid particular emphasis on the importance of travel outside one's own native land.[739] He refers to his travel in Armenia, Arrān and along the Caspian coast, probably in around 320/932, and to the enquiries he made among merchants (*al-tujjār*) and boat-owners (*arbāb al-marākib*) who had entered the land of al-Khazar, or who had sailed through the Azov Sea (*Mayuṭis*) or the Black Sea (*Nīṭas*) to the lands of the Rus' and the Bulgars, who contradicted the idea that there was direct communication between those seas and the Caspian.[740] His description of the joint Hungarian and Pecheneg attack on the Byzantine Empire in 934, whose details closely respond to a report in the Logothete's chronicle, alludes to the presence of a Muslim merchant from Ardabīl among one of the tribes, as well to visiting Muslim merchants from the lands of the Khazars, Bāb al-abwāb and the Alans.[741] It is therefore highly plausible that al-Mas'ūdī had access to recent reports about the Alans, however hard they may be to disentangle from older and transposed legendary material.

Al-Mas'ūdī emphasises the power of the Alan ruler within the north-western Caucasus: he has 30,000 horsemen (*fāris*) at his disposal, and he rules over a territory of uninterrupted settlements.[742] In addition to domination the Zikhs, the Alans are also described as dominating

[738] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, pp. 48–9); Zimonyi, *Sources*, pp. 63–6; cf. §2.1 above; al-Mas'ūdī may be associating the legend of *al-arḍ al-maḥfūra* with the northern Crimea, echoing the Γότθιο[ς] Κοίλη of the Greek sources: cf. §5.2above.

[739] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, i, 1 (ed. de Meynard, pp. 6, 9–10); on al-Mas'ūdī's breadth of interests: Miquel, *Géographie*, i, pp. 202–12; A.M.H. Shboul, *Al-Mas'ūdī and His World: A Muslim Humanist and His Interest in Non-Muslims* (London, 1979); T. Khalidi, *Islamic Historiography: the Histories of Mas'ūdī* (Albany, N.Y., 1975).

[740] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, i, 1, 14 (ed. de Meynard, pp. 5, 273–4); ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, pp. 18–25): discussion of Rus' attack on the Caspian coast after 300/912-13; date of visit to Caspian: Shboul, *Muslim Humanist*, p. 12, *contra* Miquel, *Géographie*, i, p. 206.

[741] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, pp. 59–64); Symeon the Logothete, 136 (ed. Wahlgren, p. 334).

[742] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 45); Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 157; discussion of Alan cavalry and settlement patterns in §3.4, 3.5 above; comparison of cavalry sizes of the peoples of Eastern Europe in the Jayhānī and Balkhī traditions, Ibn Faḍlān and al-Mas'ūdī: Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources*, pp. 102–16, table p. 109. Bóna calculated the 350 kg of annual tribute paid by the Byzantines to the 20,000 Avar warriors, 568–670 CE, would have meant each received an average of 18 g annually: burials of Avar horsemen from this time include an average of 10 g of gold: Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources*, p. 109.

the Christian Abkhaz who live near the Caucasus.[743] Minorsky suggests the Abkhāz referred to by al-Mas'ūdī should be identified exclusively with the 'Abkhaz proper', rather than 'the Georgian dynasty of that name', but whereas it seems likely that Alan influence was most strongly felt nearest the mountain passes between the Black Sea and the Upper Kuban, we have already seen from the Georgian sources that Alans could play an important role in the politics of the expanded Abkhaz kingdom and the western Caucasus as a whole.[744] Meanwhile, the connections between the Alans and the Caspian Sea region, discussed in previous chapters, appear to have been reinforced by marriage alliances with the Avar ruler in the mountains of the northeastern Caucasus known as the *ṣāḥib al-Sarīr*, whom al-Mas'ūdī describes as a Christian, and as prone to launch raids on the Khazars in the plains.[745] However, al-Mas'ūdī describes the Alan kings as having converted to Christianity from paganism (*jāhilliyya*) at an undefined point during the 'Abbāsid period (*fī dawlat al-'abbāsiyya*), but of having then having rejected Christianity in the year 320/932 and of having driven out the bishops and priests (*al-usāqafa wa'l-qusūs*) who had been 'sent by the *malik al-Rūm*'.[746]

Al-Mas'ūdī's presentation of the relationship between the Alans, Abkhaz, Khazars and Byzantium around the 930s supports the evidence of two Hebrew documents found in the Cairo Genizah. The first is a long version of a reply from the Khazar 'king' Joseph to Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut, the Jewish physician and diplomat at the court of caliph 'Abd al-Raḥmān III in Córdoba (d. 961); the second is a letter by an anonymous Khazar scribe (the 'Schechter document'), written around 949, probably a few years before Joseph's Reply, and apparently belonging to the 'same genre of correspondence' as a collection of other letters to and from Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut, concerning

[743] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 65); Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 160.
[744] Minorsky, *History of Sharvān,* p. 160 n. 5; cf. §5.3 above.
[745] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 42); Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 156.
[746] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 43); Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 156. The surviving version of the *Murūj* was completed in 332/943, and revised in 336; the second edition, referred to in his *Tanbīh*, was completed in 345/956, but does not survive. The notice on the current religion of the Alan ruler therefore dates to before 943: Ch. Pellat, 'al-Mas'ūdī', *EI*^{2}, pp. 785–6.

Jewish communities in the Mediterranean and the Byzantine Empire.[747] Joseph's letter responds to a request from Ḥasdai to provide a description of his kingdom; the long version describes the peoples of the Caucasus Mountains along the southern borders of his kingdom, including 'all the Alans as far as the borders of Af-kan', and other tribes, 'as far as the borders of the sea of Constantinople'.[748] If, as has been suggested, 'Af-kan' is taken to refer to the Abkhaz, this is another indication of the Alans controlling the passes through the North-Western Caucasus to the territories of the Abkhazian rulers on the Black Sea coast.[749]

The Schechter document provides a more detailed account of relations between the Khazars and Alans, down to the reign of Joseph (who was a contemporary of Romanos Lekapenos). It first describes the Khazar king Sabriel making peace with the 'king of Alan, our neighbour, since the kingdom of Alan is stronger and crueller than all the (other) nations which are around us'.[750] 'King Sabriel' does not appear in the other Khazar correspondence, but the subsequent stages of Khazar-Alan relations are located within the reigns of the kings named as grandfather (Benjamin) and father (Aaron) of Joseph in the Reply.[751] In the reign of Benjamin, 'all the nations were stirred up against [Qazar] and they besieged the[m with the aid of] the king of Maqedon […] only the king of Alan was in support of [the people of Qazar, for] some of them were observing the Law of the Jews.'[752] However, in the reign of Aaron, the Alans were 'enticed' by the 'king of Greece' to fight against the Khazars:

> But Aaron hired the king of ṬWRQY' against him for he [was strong]. The king of Alan fell before Aaron, and (the latter) captured him alive; but [the king] honoured [him gr]eatly,

[747] N. Golb, O. Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982), pp. 75–95, 125–44, for discussion of authenticity; cf. P.K. Kokovtsov, *Evreisko-khazarskaia perepiska v X veke* (Leningrad, 1932), pp. v–xxxviii; Olsson, 'Coup d'état', pp. 500–2.
[748] P.K. Kokovtsov, *Evreisko-khazarskaia perepiska v X veke* (Leningrad, 1932), pp. 101–2.
[749] Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, p. 38.
[750] Golb and Pritsak, *Hebrew Documents*, p. 113.
[751] Kokovtsov, *Perepiska*, pp. 72, 81, 89, 97–8. C. Zuckerman identifies Sabriel with the Bulan (mentioned in Joseph's Reply), whose conversion to Judaism he dates to ca. 861: 'On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor', *REB* 53 (1995), pp. 249–50.
[752] Golb and Pritsak, *Hebrew Documents*, pp. 113, 115.

> and took his daughter as a wife for his son Joseph. The king of Alan th[en sw]ore fealty to him and so Aaron the king sent him (back) to his [la]nd.[753]

Finally, the letter mentions the persecution of Jews under Romanos Lekapenos, and reports that 'Joseph then killed many Christians'.[754]

Attempts to date the campaigns described in the Schechter text must remain hypothetical since the Byzantine sources are elusive on the subject of actual confrontations sponsored by the empire against the Khazars in the period in question. The opening chapters of *DAI* (compiled ca. 950) envisage scenarios where Alans, Oğuz or 'Black Bulgars' might be enticed to fight the Khazars, but do not specify instances where this has occurred.[755] Chapters 37 to 40, apparently belonging to the 'northern dossier', compiled in the reign of Leo VI (ca. 900), describe internal conflicts within the Khazar tribal confederacy, and conflicts between Khazars and their allies and the Pechenegs, but do not mention any Byzantine involvement in the politics of the steppe. Other Byzantine and western sources indicate that this was disingenuous: the Byzantine decision to ferry Magyars across the Danube to fight the Bulgars in around 894 had caused the Bulgars to recruit Pechenegs, who drove the Magyars off the Ukrainian steppe and into Moravia.[756] Zuckerman dates the campaign in the time of Benjamin to a time of conflict between the Khazars and Oğuz shortly before Ibn Faḍlān travelled through the same region in 921/2.[757] Vinogradov objects to the latter dating on the basis that the Alan king, who is described as an ally of the

[753] Golb and Pritsak, *Hebrew Documents*, p. 115.
[754] Golb and Pritsak, *Hebrew Documents*, p. 115.
[755] Benjamin is confronted by an alliance of the SY, TWRQY, 'BM and PYYNYL, read by Pritsak as As/Burtas, Turks (Magyars), Black Bulgars and Pechenegs. The reading of 'BM is especially obscure (omitted by Kokovtsov), and Pritsak's interpretation has been challenged: Golb and Pritsak, *Hebrew Documents*, pp. 113, 133–4; Kokovtsov, *Perepiska*, p. 117 and n. 1; Zuckerman, 'On the Date', p. 254 n. 61.
[756] Leo VI himself records this in his *Taktika*, 18.40 (ed. Dennis, p. 452); cf. *DAI*, 37, lines 55-60 (p. 172); Skylitzes, Leo VI, 12 (ed. Turn, p. 176; tr. Wortley, pp. 170–1); *Annales Fuldenses*, s.a. 894, 895, 896 (ed. Kurze, pp. 125–6, 129–30); Whittow, *Making,* p. 230.
[757] Zuckerman, 'On the Date', pp. 254–; Ibn Faḍlān, *Riḥla*, 33 (ed. and trans. Montgomery, pp. 210–13). Pritsak dates the campaign to the 890s, but this is based on a reading of *DAI* which places the expulsion of the Pechenegs from the north of the Caspian Sea ca. 889: *Hebrew Documents*, pp. 132–7; this dating, although still widely accepted, should probably be rejected: Whittow, *Making*, p. 231; cf. Zhivkov, *Khazaria*, p. 127.

Khazars, was then a Christian.[758] This objection is insufficient: the existence of a Christian mission in the North-West Caucasus was not necessarily incompatible with alliance between the Alans and the Khazars. While the Schechter letter does suggest a religious motivation for the alliance, this may simply be a pious gloss for the benefit of the letter's Jewish recipient. However, we have already seen that Romanos Lekapenos' government was attempting to use Giorgi of Abkhazia and its re-organised ecclesiastical network in the North-West Caucasus to recruit Alan fighters against the Bulgars at this time; it is hard to see why Romanos would simultaneously have attempted to form a coalition against the Khazars at precisely this moment.[759] By Zuckerman's own admission, conflicts between the Khazars and Pechenegs are described as annual events by Gardīzī, while conflicts with the Oğuz and Burtas are also regular occurrences: there is no reason to tie this down to the 920s.[760] The dating of the war will have to remain indeterminate, which in itself is significant: just as the *DAI* does not tell the full story about Byzantine meddling in the western Ukrainian steppe, imperial records may have passed over the nature of unsuccessful initiatives taken in the more distant north-eastern Black Sea region in silence.

Vinogradov and Zuckerman are agreed, however, in seeing a connection between the war in the time of Aaron and the notice in al-Mas'ūdī about the expulsion of the Byzantine bishops and priests: they propose that this was the result of the defeat of the Alan king, and the terms of the subsequent peace negotiations. Both also connect these events with the Schechter letter's reference to Romanos's persecution of Jewish communities, and the retaliatory action taken by the Khazar ruler. Zuckerman even suggests that Romanos's actions against Jews within the empire was in retaliation for the expulsion of the Christian mission from Alania; Vinogradov, more

[758] Vinogradov and Beletskii, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, p.32.
[759] Cf. Vinogradov and Beletskii, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, p. 32. Note also that the Byzantine emperor is referred to here as the 'king of Maqedon', which might suggest an association with Leo VI rather than Romanos, although this perhaps assumes too much knowledge of Byzantine dynastic politics on the part of the Khazar writer.
[760] Göckenjan and Zimonyi, *Berichte*, p. 167; A.P. Martinez, 'Gardīzī's Two Chapters on the Turks', *AEMA*, 2 (1982), p. 154; Zuckerman, 'On the Date', p. 254.

plausibly, reverses the sequence of events.[761] Letters belonging to the same collection as the Schechter document refer to persecution of the Jewish community of Otranto, and to the offensive practice of *colaphus Judaeorum* in Provence at the same time.[762] Elsewhere, Al-Mas'ūdī reports that large numbers of Jewish refugees had fled to Khazaria 'from all the Muslim cities (*amṣār*) and from the land of Rūm, because in our time, in the year 332 [944], Armanūs [Romanos], king of Rūm, attempted to force the Jews in his empire to convert to Christianity'.[763] A letter of Doge Peter II of Venice and Patriarch Marinus of Grado to the German king Henry I and Archbishop Hildibert of Mainz, read at the Synod of Erfurt in 932, also mentions an order by Romanos to convert 'all the Jews in his empire to faith of Christ'. According to the letter, Romanos had taken this step after a conflict between Jews and Christians in Jerusalem had provoked the Patriarch of Jerusalem to forcibly convert the Jews, and to appeal to Romanos to follow his example.[764] Romanos's persecution of Jews in the Byzantine Empire, is thus independently attested, dated to around the time of the expulsion of the Alan mission, and was evidently known to the Khazar authorities.

If it seems implausible that Romanos's government would have attempted to sponsor initiatives against the Khazars in around 920, when Symeon of Bulgaria was threatening the hinterland of Constantinople, and when the imperial government was attempting to recruit Alans and Pechenegs against them, the same cannot be said for the 930s, by which time peace had been established with Symeon's successor, Peter. After the reference to Romanos's persecution of the Jews, the Schechter letter relates that Romanos provided 'HLGW [Helgo] king of RWSY' [Rus']' with material incentives to attack the 'city of SMKRYY [Samkerts]'.[765] Samkerts, which is also

[761] Zuckerman, 'On the Date', p. 255; Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 36–7.
[762] The Provençal letter and Schechter text were copied by the same scribe: Golb and Prisak, *Hebrew Documents*, pp. 86–95.
[763] Al-Mas'ūdī, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 8).
[764] *MGH Conc.,* vi, pp. 113 – 114; cf. pp. 110–11; Michael McCormick argues that the Venetian appeal to Henry was 'manifestly an effort to eliminate Jewish (commercial) competition' in Transalpine trade: *Origins,* p. 970.
[765] Golb and Pritsak, *Hebrew Documents*, pp. 114–15.

mentioned in Joseph's Reply, is usually identified with Tamatarkha/Tmutarakan' on the Taman peninsula.[766] Ibn al-Faqīh refers in his *Kitāb al-buldān*, completed in around 290/903, to Rus' merchants (*tujjār al-ṣaqāliba*) arriving by sea to 'S.mkūsh of the Jews (*al-yahūd*)', which might suggest the presence of Jewish merchants under Khazar protection at the Kerch straits.[767] Significant numbers of mid-ninth to mid-tenth century Byzantine coin finds (largely Cherson mint), amphorae, pitchers with traces of naphtha, 'Pecheneg' ceramic traditions, vessels with 'Khazar' graffiti, testify to the continued vitality of this as a 'Khazar trading centre', down to the second half of the tenth century.[768] If the Schechter letter is to be believed, Romanos's government made the decision to use the Rus' to disrupt this centre and shift the balance of power in the region's wider exchange networks. The Schechter letter describes a chain of subsequent events, where a Khazar commander then attacked 'ŠWRŠWN' [Cherson] in retaliation, defeated Helgo and forced him to launch an attack across the sea on 'QWSṬNTYN'' [Constantinople], which ended in defeat for Helgo, who fled to FRS [Persia], where he and his men died.[769] Zuckerman has linked the Rus' attack on Byzantine territory, and the subsequent flight to 'Persia' with, respectively, the Rus' attack of 941 recorded in Byzantine sources (and like the Schechter text, described as lasting four months and ending in defeat due to the use of Greek fire) and the attack on Bardha'a in 944 recorded by Miskwayh and others.[770]

If the evidence of the Schechter text, and Zuckerman's reconstruction is accepted, Romanos's recruitment of the Rus' against a Khazar centre on the Taman peninsula was indirectly

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[766] SMKRTs: Kokovtsov, *Perepiska*, p. 102; J. Shepard, 'Closer Encounters with the Byzantine World: The Rus at the Straits of Kerch', *Pre-Modern Russia and its World. Essays in Honor of Thomas S. Noonan,* ed. K.L. Reverson, Th.G. Stavrou, J.D. Tracy (Wiesbaden, 2006), p. 19.

[767] Alternative reading: *s.mkrs*: Ibn al-Faqīh, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. De Goeje, pp. 250–1; although note that the work only survives in a later abbreviation: Miquel, *Géographie*,i, p. 154. In Phanagoria, which flourished in the eighth and ninth centuries, also located on the Kerch straits, there have been several finds of Jewish tombstones with tamgas on the reverse side: S.A. Pletneva, 'Goroda Tamanskogo poluostrova v kontse VIII-XII vekakh', *Krym, Severo-Vostochnoe Prichernomor'e i Zakavka'e*, p. 183.

[768] S.A. Pletneva, 'Kochevniki v Tamatarkhe', *RA* (2001), 2, pp. 97–107; id., 'Goroda Tamanskogo poluostrova', pp. 171–9; Zhivkov, *Khazaria*, pp. 169, 236; V.E. Flerova, *Graffiti Khazarii* (Moscow, 1997), pp. 67–80; cf. §2.6 above.

[769] Golb and Pritsak, *Hebrew Documents*, pp. 114–19.

[770] Zuckerman, 'On the Date', pp. 257–8.

responsible for a Khazar attack on Cherson and a major Rus' raid in the vicinity of Constantinople. Al-Mas'ūdī suggests an analogous case in his presentation of the combined Pecheneg and Magyar campaign of 934, which he suggests was provoked by Byzantine opportunism.[771] Jonathan Shepard has argued that the events described in the Schechter text had a significant effect on the policy advice given by Constantine VII to his son in *DAI.* The omission of an envisaged role for the Rus' as auxiliaries against the Khazars, the warning about the possibility of Khazar attacks on Cherson (chapter 11), and of Rus' attacks on Constantinople (chapter 4), reflected conclusions drawn from the experience of recent history: 'The recommendations as to how, through deterrence of the Khazars, Cherson and the Klimata may be protected are matched in detail only by the prescriptions for preventing the Rus from attacking "this imperial city"'.[772] The reference in chapter 4 of *DAI* to the importance of keeping peace with the Pechenegs to prevent Magyar ('Turk') invasions that could lead to the Byzantines having to make large payments as the price of peace indicates a conclusion was also drawn from the events described by al-Mas'ūdī, who describes the large pay-outs the Byzantines were forced to make having provoked Pecheneg tribesmen to join with the Magyars in a combined attack.[773] This would in turn suggest that the specific emphasis on the value of alliance with the Alans was a veiled reference to the previous administration's foreign policy that had allowed them to slip out of contact with Constantinople, at the same time as the Rus' had been courted with such disastrous effect. The address to the Alan ruler as Constantine's 'spiritual son' in *De ceremoniis*, implicitly taking credit for the conversion, further reinforced the point.

[771] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 64); Zimonyi, *Sources*, p. 243.
[772] Shepard, 'Constantine VII's Doctrine', pp. 264–83 (cited p. 268).
[773] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 64); Wahlgren suggested that the Logothete's reference to Romanos's 'magnanimity and philanthropy' towards the Magyars was an allusion to criticisms at the time for overpaying them: Symeon the Logothete, 135 (ed. Wahlgren, p. 334).

5.8. The Senty Church and its inscription

The evidence of *De ceremoniis* strongly suggests that the expulsion of the Byzantine mission from the North-West Caucasus was short lived, and that the suggestions in the *DAI* that the Alans could be recruited against the Khazars amounted to more than wishful thinking.[774] The exact circumstances under which Byzantine missionaries were able to re-establish a presence in Alan territories remain obscure, but sigillographic and epigraphic evidence indicate this was accompanied by a rise in status for the Alan mission. The reverse of a Byzantine lead seal whose lettering and invocative monogram on the obverse side show characteristic features of the mid-tenth century, shows the appearance of a metropolitan see of Alania: ΙΓΝΑ̣Τ-ΙΟ ΜΟΝΑΧ̣,-<S> ΜΙΤΡΟΠΟΛ̣-<Ι>Τ, ΤΙC ΑΛ-<Α>ΝΙΑC (Ignatios the monk, Metropolitan of Alania) (Fig.5.1).[775] It is possible that the promotion of the autocephalous archbishopric of Alania held by Peter to metropolitan status occurred even before the events of 932: Nicholas's letters indicate a reorganisation of the see was under way at the end of his Patriarchate.[776] However, an alternative possibility is that the raised prestige of the Alan mission, like the elaborate respect shown to the *exousiokratōr*, was instead an attempt to win the loyalty of the Alan ruler and the other *dynatoi* as a response to the débacle of the early 930s.[777]

While Ignatios's seal cannot be dated precisely, the inscription on the wall of the Senty Church above the Teberda valley provides a firm date for the existence of a Metropolitan of Alania, and for direct relations between the Byzantine imperial administration and the *exousiokratōr* of Alania (Map VII, Fig. 5.3). The Teberda River, which is a tributary of the Kuban', originates at the

[774] *contra* N.Ia. Polovoi, 'O marshrute pokhoda russkikh na Berdaa i russko-khazarskikh otnosheniiakh v 943 g.', *VV,* 20 (45) (1961), pp. 95–6.
[775] Seibt, 'Herrschaft', pp. 51–2.
[776] Seibt dates the seal to the 920s or 930s and suggests Ignatios may have been Peter's direct successor: 'Herrschaft', p. 52; see §5.4 above. The first reference to the Alan metropolitan see in the *Notitiae Episcopatuum* is in *Not.Ep.* 11, line 63 (ed. Darrouzès, p. 343); a confirmation of a tome against the Jacobites, dating to 1032 contains a signature of the metropolitan of Alania: Grumel-Darrouzès, *Regestes*[2], No. 840, p. 346.
[777] Cf. Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 43–4.

glacier at the Klukhor pass.[778] Down from the pass, the Teberda river flows through a deep narrow valley, whose slopes are covered in mixed deciduous (beech, plane, oak) and coniferous (pine) forest. The Senty Church is located on the rocky outcrop of Burun-syrt above the left bank of the Teberda. A few kilometres downstream, the Teberda joins the Kuban' proper, on the site of what is now the town of Karachaevsk.[779] The fortress of Khumara and Shoana Church face each across the Kuban', high above the river, a couple of kilometres downstream of the confluence of the rivers, as the Kuban' valley just begins to widen.[780]

The Senty Church is a crossed-dome church, clearly visible from the valley far below. Like the cross-in-square Shoana Church (Fig. 5.2), it had been known to Russian and European visitors to the region for over a century, when the decision was made in the 1890s to establish a small Russian orthodox convent on the site.[781] The presence of the convent, and the walling off of the territory, created tensions with local Karachai, who had previously used the slopes for pasture, and the church as a refuge in bad weather.[782] The official Russian view was that territories on the left bank of the Teberda belonged to the Russian state rather than to the Karachai, but the latter had long argued against the unfair terms of the land settlement after their formal acceptance Russian rule in 1828.[783] D'iachkov-Tarasov, who visited the site in 1898, described its abbess Ekaterina in a state of conflict with her 'thieving' Karachai neighbours.[784] The activities of the nuns also provoked mild criticism from some Russian visitors, for their aggressive 'restoration' work on

[778] A.N. D'iachkov-Tarasov, 'V gorakh Bol'shogo i Malago Karachaia', *SMOMPK*, 28 (1900), p. 69; the sources of the Kuban' are streams on the slopes of El'brus, further east: Sysoev, Karachai', pp. 9–10
[779] This effectively has the status of the Karachai 'capital' of Karachaevo-Cherkessiia; the actual capital of the republic is Cherkessk further downstream the Kuban'. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Karachaevsk was called Georgievskoe-Osetinskoe, after the orthodox Ossetians who were settled here: V.M. Sysoev, 'Karachai v geographicheskom, bytovom i istoricheskom otnosheniiakh', *SMOMPK*, 43 (1913), p. 46. Today, a stone shrine to Uastyrdzhi, the Ossetian saint whose cult is related to that of St. George, marks the path to the Shoana Church nearby. On Uastyrdzhi: V.I. Abaev, *Istoriko-etomolicheskii slovar' osetinskogo iazyka* (Moscow, 1989), iv, p. 56.
[780] Khumara: §§4.3, 5.6 above.
[781] Its future abbess first came to the site 1891; it was officially opened in 1897: Sysoev, 'Karachai', pp. 39–40.
[782] D'iachkov-Tarasov, 'V gorakh', p. 55.
[783] Sysoev, 'Karachai', pp. 40, 92–3.
[784] D'iachkov-Tarasov, 'V gorakh', pp. 50, 55.

the church. They were especially criticised for destroying the vestibules that had once been located on the north, west and south of the church.[785]

The church is surrounded by burials, many now disturbed, of a variety of different types.[786] There are rock burials in the slopes beneath and above the church. A rectangular stone mausoleum to the north-west of the church, thought to date to a similar time as the construction of the church itself, survives, while at least one other such construction was once located nearby, but is now destroyed. Many of the structures around the church have been raided for building materials over time: in 1899, Vladimirov described a stone sheep pen at a small spring on the slope, with some stones with inscribed crosses, apparently belonging to this category; building material from surrounding structures was also used in the reconstruction of the vestibules. Vladimirov also noted reports that two years before local shepherds had sold valuables found on the site to engineers working on the Klukhor pass. Locals told him that 'rich Greeks' had once lived here. [787]

In 1976, Markovin excavated a deep burial in the south arm of the church's interior. The burial was covered with three stones, and contained a wooden coffin against its south wall. It had been disturbed, apparently during the fourteenth century (based on the type of arrow-heads found). It contained 127 items, including gold and silver bracelets, buckles, medallions and faience and gemstone scarab jewellery. The burial included a gold enamel plaque (diameter 3.8 cm), with a central image of bird in profile, with one wing raised and its head turned backwards. The object had been used for some time before burial: it made to be worn as a pendant, but the loophole had broken, and a new hole had been drilled through its border. It would originally have been encrusted with pearls.[788] The deceased, whose remains have not survived, would have been covered with a silk shroud. Markovin found nineteen fragments of fine red twill silk, identified as

[785] Sysoev, 'Karachai', p. 104; the vestibules now visible were built in 1897: Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 200–3.
[786] Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 179–81, esp n. 5 p. 180.
[787] I.A. Vladimirov, 'Razvaliny starinnogo khrama bliz rechki Amgaty', *IAK*, 1 (1901), pp. 104–6.
[788] T.I. Makorova, V.I. Markovin, 'Zolotoe ukrashenie s peregorodchatoi emal'iu iz Sentinskogo khrama', *SA* (1981) 3, pp. 268–74.

Byzantine on the basis of its weave. The silk was threaded with gold, with garland and vine-leaf motifs, as well as images of predators, birds and a double-headed eagle (Fig. 5.4). Stylistic and technical details suggested a tenth- or eleventh-century Byzantine provenance for both the plaque and the silk.[789]

Traces of frescos and Greek inscriptions cover the walls. Beletskii and Vinogradov's study of the frescos makes use of both what survives on the walls, and of nineteenth century copies, above all those of Vladimirov. Evidently, caution is needed when working from second-hand evidence of this kind, but Beletskii and Vinogradov come to the conclusion that Vladimirov (unlike Strukov, on whose images reconstruction of many of the frescos at Nizhnii Arkhyz depends), was a careful and skilled copyist.[790] Four stages of decoration have been distinguished. The stucco for the earliest stage is dark grey, the same as the binding mortar for the walls, and covered with a chalk layer mixed with organic fibres in preparation for future frescos. At the first stage, the walls were whitewashed and two large gemmed crosses on Golgotha steps were painted in dark blue, black and ochre between the windows of the apse. The 965 inscription belongs to this layer.[791] In the second stage, the original walls were whitewashed (and the 965 inscription thus hidden) and more elaborate crosses were added in the apse; some large Greek inscriptions in ochre belong to this period: these consist of two lists of nine and four Greek names, respectively, and two invocations, for which a further three Greek names can be read. In the third stage, the Mother of God Blachernitissa was added above the apse, and an image of St. Nicholas to the north of the altar windows; in the fourth, the whole church was decorated with saints, including monks, Church Fathers, mounted warrior saints and images of Constantine and Helena, and scenes from the life of Christ in the upper register. It is possible that there were donor portraits belonging to

[789] V.I. Markovin, 'Vizantiiskaia tkan' s zolotym shit'em iz Sentinskogo khrama', *Problemy arkheologii i etnografii Karachaevo-Cherkessii* (Cherkessk, 1983), pp. 67–76.
[790] Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 68 n. 3, 212.
[791] Beletskii and Vingoradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 212–14.

this final phase in the south-east compartment. Graffiti, also invocational, and exclusively with Greek names, can be identified over the second to fourth stages of decoration.

The dated inscription, which was discovered, deciphered and analysed by Beletskii and Vinogradov, was located on the south wall of the apse, made with black paint over white stucco (Fig. 5.5). It is still clearly visible through a layer of whitewash, and in spite of further subsequent over-painting. The similarity of the script with inscriptions from Byzantine metalwork of the ninth and tenth centuries led Vinogradov and Beletskii to suggest it might have been copied from a liturgical vessel.[792] Their reading of the Greek text is as follows:

> + Ἐνεκεν[ισ]θ(η), ἐνεώσ[θ(η)] ὁ να[ὸς] τ(ῆς)
> ὑπεργίας θ(εοτόκ)ου ἐπὴ βασηλ[είας
> Νικηφώρου βασηλ[(έως)] καὶ αὐγ(γούστου) (?) ΑΣ[...
> κὲ Δα(υὶ)δ ἐξουσηωκράτορ(ος) [Ἀλανίας
> κ(αὶ) Μαρίας ἐξουσηωκράτ[ορίσσης
> μ]ην(ὴ) Ἀπρη(λίου) β’, ἡμέρᾳ ἀγ[ή]ου Α[ντιπάσχα (?)
> δηὰ χηρὸς Θεοδώρου, μητ[ροπο-
> λ(ίτου) καθηγη(ασμένου) Ἀλανί(ας), ἀπ[ὸ] κ[τί
> σε(ως) κό(σμου) ἔτους ϛυογ’. Ἀν[ε-
> γράφε[το] δηὰ χειρὸς [τοῦ δεῖνος
> ἀποκρησ(ιαρίου) πατρ(ικίου).[793]

This can be translated as follows:

> The Church of the Most Holy Mother of God was dedicated and restored in the reign of the emperor Nikephoros and the augusta AS (?)…, and David, *exousiokratōr* [of Alania], and Maria, the *exousiokratorissa*, on 2 April, on the Day of Holy Antipaschus (?), by the hand of Theodore, established as Metropolitan over Alania, in the year 6473 AM [965 CE]. Written by the hand of N., *apokrisiarios* and *patrikios.*

The pairing of the imperial couple and the ruler of Alania and his wife in the inscription reflects the self-presentation of all four. Leo the Deacon mentions that Nikephoros Phokas was wintering in Cappadocia in 964/5, in between fighting in Cilicia.[794] Skylitzes adds the important information that his augusta Theophano and her sons had travelled with him, and had stayed in a stronghold

[792] Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, p. 241.
[793] Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 241, 243.
[794] Leo the Deacon, *History*, iii, 11; iv, 1 (ed. Hase, pp. 53–7; trans. Talbot and Sullivan, pp. 103–5); Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, p. 245.

(ἔν τινι φρουρίῳ) in Cilica while Nikephoros was on campaign.[795] In the light of the controversy surrounding Theophano's role in Nikephoros's accession, and their marriage, her presence on the eastern frontier signalled her loyalty to the militaristic new regime, and simultaneously brought the latter the prestige associated with the court of the Macedonian emperors. As Rosemary Morris argued, Theophano's role in the accession of both Nikephoros and later Tzimiskes indicates a particular 'part that could be played by empress-regents in the passing on of the imperial tradition vested in them by virtue of their own coronations'.[796] The transfer of the court to the eastern frontier clearly impressed the Cappadocian aristocracy. At the east end of the north wall of the 'Pigeon Church' at Çavusin, a fresco depicts Nikephoros and Theophano, with other members of the imperial family: caesar Bardas Phokas (Nikephoros's father) and the *kouropalatēs* Leo Phokas (Nikephoros Phokas). John Tzimiskes and Melias (Mleh) are depicted as holy warriors, with nimbuses. Tzimiskes's long coat, spear, trousers and scarf reveal close similarities with the riding costumes discussed in chapter four.[797] The ensemble combines military victory, the presence of Theophano, and the cross: Nikephoros is holding a cross, and his crown has three crosses. The particular prominence of the cross in Nikephoros's iconography appears significant in light of the plan chosen for the Senty Church, and the iconographic scheme that accompanied the inscription naming the emperor.

Meanwhile, the pairing of David and Mariam associates the latter with the imperial couple, and indicates some noteworthy features of the evolving political culture of the Alans. The title *exousiokratorissa* is attested here for the first time. On the basis of the discussion of burial

[795] Skylitzes, 'Nikephoros II', 11 (ed. Thurn, p.268; tr. Cheynet, p. 225).
[796] R. Morris, 'Succession and Usurpation: Politics and Rhetoric in the late Tenth Century', *New Constantines: the Rhythym of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th – 13th Centuries*, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1994), p. 205.
[797] Anonymous donor portraits make clear this was not an imperial commission. Inscriptions acclaiming Tzimiskes as emperor, and an invocation giving Melias the title of *magistros,* were added later: C. Jolivet-Lévy, 'La glorification de l'empereur à l'église du Grand pigeonnier de Çavuşin', *Histoire et Archéologie. Les Dossiers*, 63 (1982), pp. 73–7; id., *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce* (Paris, 1991), pp. 15–22, pl. 21–3; M. Restle, *Byzantine Wall-Painting in Asia Minor* (Greenwich, Conn., 1967), pp. 30–6, 135–8; N. Thierry, 'Un portrait de Jean Tzimiskès en Cappadoce', *TM,* 9 (1985), pp. 477–84; L. Rodley, 'The Pigeon House, Çavuşin', *JÖB*, 33 (1983), pp. 301–39; cf. §4.3 above.

customs in the previous two chapters, it seems likely that Mariam's prominence on the inscription was a reflection of the power that elite women had been able to hold within Alan society in the pre-Christian period.[798] This may have been reinforced by the influence of Christian Georgian political culture, where the cult of the female St. Nino, converter of Queen Nana, was beginning to develop at this time.[799] There is an indication of the significant political and landowning power that elite Georgian women could hold in the discussion of Art'anuji in *DAI.*[800] Anthony Eastmond emphasises the novelty of aspects of Queen Tamar's (1184–1213) promotion of the cult of St. Nino, in her search for alternatives to Byzantine models of political power; however, on a territory that was neither Georgian nor Byzantine, the Senty Church may indicate an earlier partial convergence.[801] The Christian names taken by the *exousiokratōr* and *exousiokratorissa* further suggest the influence of Georgian royal onomastics – interestingly, rather than Abkhazian. The Davidic origins claimed by the Iberian Bagrat'ioni were noted in the garbled genealogy given for them in the *DAI*, and it so happened that Davit' of Tao was an important ally of Nikephoros Phokas at the very time the inscription was made.[802] It also cannot have gone unnoticed that Mariam shared her name with the dedicatee of the church, the Mother of God.

As Vinogradov and Beletskii observe, the fact that the *apokrisiarios* holds the title of *patrikios* is an indication that the person in question is an imperial envoy from the civil administration, rather than a cleric.[803] There was no necessary contradiction between performing a diplomatic task and being a churchman, and indeed a ninth-century text on 'How envoys should be despatched and

[798] cf. §§3.4, 4.3 above on gender marking through clothes and grave goods.
[799] cf. §5.3 above.
[800] Evans, 'Kastron, rabaḍ and arḍūn', p. 350.
[801] A. Eastmond, 'Royal Renewal in Georgia: the Case of Queen Tamar', *New Constantines*, pp. 283–93.
[802] *DAI*, 45, lines 1–42, pp. 204–6; cf. §5.9 below.
[803] Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 44–5, 245; cf. the uses of *apokrisiarios* for 'diplomatic agents', both Byzantine and non-Byzantine, in *DAI* 1, lines 19, 21; 29, lines 70, 172, 177, 180, pp. 48, 126, 132.

received', specifically emphasised that envoys 'must be known above all for their piety'.[804] Nevertheless, the specific reference to the reign of Nikephoros and his augusta in the dedication reinforces the impression that there was direct imperial sponsorship behind the visit of the *apokrisiarios* to the Teberda valley in the year 965. The orthographic parallel with Byzantine metalwork might indicate that the *apokrisiarios* brought with him a vessel specially engraved with the same inscription, among other gifts.[805]

Beletskii and Vinogradov make two suggestions about the motivation for the sending of such a high ranking emissary to the Alans at precisely this time. The first suggestion was that Nikephoros aimed to recruit Alan cavalry for the campaigns against Mopsuestia and Tarsus. The second suggestion is that his administration was planning to reinforce an alliance against the Khazars, in connection with Rus' activities at precisely the same time.[806] According to the Rus' chronicle, the *Povest' vremennykh let (PVL)*, it was in 6473 AM (965 CE) that the Rus' prince Sviatoslav launched a major campaign against the Khazars and their Qaghan. The Rus' defeated the Khazars, seized their city (*grad*, Slavonic equivalent of *kastron*) of Bela Vezha (Бѣл[а] Веж[а]; modern Russian: Белая Вежа), and defeated the Iasy (Ясы) and Kasogy (Касогы).[807] The Slavonic 'Bela Vezha', meaning 'White Tower', closely corresponds to the Greek glosses of the meaning of Sarkel in *DAI* (ἄσπρον ὀσπίτιον) and Theophanes Continuatus (λευκὸν οἴκημα).[808] Pletneva linked the clear traces of destruction by fire in the stratigraphy of the settlement at Left-Bank Tsimliansk (identified with Sarkel), and the discovery of a clay pot containing hoard with military belts and dirhams dated between 907 and 954 CE, with the events described in *PVL*.[809] A similar stratigraphic picture has emerged at Tamatarkha (Samkerts), where a large unfired brick

[804] *Peri stratēgias,* 43 (ed. G.T. Dennis, p. 126); D. Lee, J. Shepard, 'A Double Life: Placing the *Peri Presbeson*', *BSl*, 52 (1991), pp. 30, 37.
[805] Note that Byzantine envoys were often holders of imperial plate: Lee and Shepard, 'Double Life', p. 37.
[806] Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 44–5.
[807] *PVL*, s.a. 6473, ed. D. Ostrowski, pp. 431–3.
[808] *DAI,* 42, line 24, p. 182; Theophanes Continuatus, III.28, line 6 (ed. Featherstone and Codoñer, p. 176); *DAI* II (Comm.), p. 154; Joseph's Reply gives *Š.r.kīl*: Kokovtsov, *Perepiska*, pp. 31, 102; Golden, *Khazar Studies*, i, pp. 239–43.
[809] Pletneva, *Drevnerusskii gorod*, pp. 36–8.

defensive wall was destroyed, and a layer of charcoal covers cultural layers associated with finds of the first half of the tenth century.[810] Iasy is a term used elsewhere in early Rus' writing to cover Iranic-speaking peoples living in both the south Russian steppe and in the North-West Caucasus, but the reference here to the Kasogy is a clear reference to people (Circassians) associated with the North-West Caucasus.[811]

Jonathan Shepard has argued that Constantine VII's policy of 'containment of the Rus'' was promoted by Constantine VII in reaction against the policies of Romanos Lekapenos, but was not adhered to by Nikephoros Phokas.[812] Shepard suggests that attacks on Sarkel and Samkerts were on Sviatoslav's own initiative, but were 'congenial to Nicephoros', while Sviatoslav's invasion of Bulgaria was actively encouraged by the imperial authorities. In the summer of 967, Kalokyros *patrikios*, the son of the *proteuon* of Cherson, was sent to Sviatoslav with 15 kentenaria (15,000 pounds) of gold to incite him against the Bulgarians.[813] The events that followed, with Sviatoslav establishing himself on the Danube frontier, and with Kalokyros using Sviatoslav's backing to launch a claim for the imperial throne himself, contributed to Nikephoros Phokas's own downfall.[814] Does the new evidence for a visit of the *apokrisarios* to the Teberda valley in 965 suggest that the imperial government had intervened more actively in the north-east Black Sea region two years before the sending of Kalokyros? The *DAI* advised that the *exousiokratōr* of the Alans could be encouraged to block the path of the Khazars to 'Sarkel and the *klimata* and Cherson' (precisely the areas that appear to have been attacked by Sviatoslav), and it is possible that the North Caucasian Alans had been called upon to play such a role during the visit of the Byzantine *apokrisiarios* in spring 965. This might then be seen either as indirect evidence for

[810] Pletneva, 'Goroda tamanskogo poluostrova', p. 172; id., 'Oboronitel'naia stena v Tamatarkha-Tmutarakani', *Istoriko-arkheologicheskii al'manakh*, 6 (2000), p. 25.
[811] Κασαχία: *DAI*, ch. 42, lines 13, 101, pp. 182, 186; Arabic *kashak*: cf. §4.4, 5.7 above; for the 'Iasy' and the 'Don Alans': cf. §3.3 above.
[812] Shepard, 'Containment of the Rus'', p. 276.
[813] Leo the Deacon, *History*, iv, 6 (ed. Hase, p. 63; tr. Talbot and Sullivan, pp.111–12); Skylitzes, 'Nikephoros', 20 (ed. Thurn, p. 277).
[814] Shepard, 'Rus at the Straits of Kerch', p. 27; although cf. J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)*, No.4, pp. 22, 392–4.

coordination with Sviatoslav, or as a separate initiative by the Byzantine authorities that unintentionally provided the Rus' leader with an opportunity to launch the attacks on the Lower Don.

The *PVL* report that Sviatoslav also attacked the Kasogy and Iasy makes the idea of coordination of this nature seem less likely. Jonathan Shepard took the Iasy to refer to the North Caucasian Alans, which seems plausible given their presentation along with the Circassians, when he argued, 'Sviatoslav's subjugation of the Kasogians and Alans also opened up possible routes across the Kuban steppes to the Caspian'.[815] The coincidence of interests envisaged by chapter 11 of *DAI* would have been based on the Alans asserting control over some of these routes themselves – connections, which, as we have seen, were reinforced by marriage ties with the *ṣāḥib al-sarīr* in the North Eastern Caucasus. *PVL* implies that in the 960s, at least, the Rus' under Sviatoslav came into conflict with the Alans over their attempt to impose their own hegemony over the Kuban steppes, although this was a text that was designed to emphasise the authority of the Riurikovich princes.[816] There are other examples of coordination between Rus' and Alans in attacks on the Caspian region. Bar Hebraeus and Niẓāmī report Alan involvement in the major Rus' campaign against Bardha'a in 944.[817] The *History of Sharwān and al-Bāb* reports Alan, Sarīr and Rus' raiding on Derbent, the Caspian coast and the Kur valley in the years 1030-33; the Rus' prince of

[815] S. Franklin and J. Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus, 750–1200* (London, 1996), pp. 144–5.
[816] *PVL* was compiled in the late eleventh or early twelfth century in the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves, with sponsorship from the princes of Kyiv, who were descendents of Sviatoslav. On the stages of its composition: A.A. Shakhmatov, *Istoriia russkogo letopisaniia*, ed. V.V. Iakovlev (St. Petersbug, 2003); A.A. Shakhmatov, *Povest' vremennykh let* i ee istochniki, *TODRL*, 4 (1940), pp. 92–103; *Povest' vremmenykh let*, ed. D.S. Likhachev (Moscow, 1950), ii, pp. 271–358; D. Ostrowski, 'The Načal'nyi svod theory and the Povest' vremennykh let', *Russian Linguistics*, 31 (2007), pp. 269–308; A.A. Gippius, 'K probleme redaktsii PVL', *Slavianovedenie*, 5 (2007), pp. 20–44; 2 (2008), pp. 3–24.
[817] Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Iskender-name*, tr. E.E. Bertel's, A.K.Arends (Baku, 1983), pp. 285, 293, 298, 304–5, 309–10, 314; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography,* ed. E.A. Walllis Budge (Oxford, 1932), p. 163; Alemany, *Sources*, pp. 364–6, 371, 388–9. Note, however, that Miskawayh's detailed account omits any reference to Alans: Miskawayh, *The Ecclipse of the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, s.a. AH 332, ed. H.F. Amedroz, D.S. Margoliouth (Oxford, 1921), ii, pp. 62– 8; trans. D.S. Margoliouth, v, pp. 67–74; cf. §2.5 above.

Tmuturukan', Mstislav, who appears to have been allied to Constantinople at the time, may have provided the Rus' raiders with a base for these campaigns.[818]

Over the course of the tenth century, closer contact was being made between Rus' warbands, whether led by princes claiming wider political authority or not, and the inhabitants of the mountians and piedmonts of the North Caucasus. Ibn Ḥawqal reports that in 358/968–9, he had asked people in Jurjān about the city of Samandar 'between [Itil] and Bāb al-Abwāb', and was told that it had previously boasted an abundance of vineyards, as well as mosques, churches and synagogues, but had recently been devastated by a Rus' raid.[819] As Kalinina has argued, this may refer to a separate Rus' raid, a year or so after Sviatoslav's attack on the Lower Don, but it is further evidence of Rus' raiding in the North Caucasus at this time.[820] Even if the presence of the *apokrisarios patrikios* in the Teberda valley is not evidence of Byzantine initiation of the raids, it is an indication that Nikephoros Phokas's administration was positioning itself to respond to, and if possible, take advantage of such developments.

5.9. Monastic networks and military recruitment

The cultivation of relations with the Alans in the reign of Nikephoros Phokas, and in particular, the sponsorship of church-building, can also be put into the context of his family's ties with the Iberian Bagrationi, the Iberian aristocracy, and the developing networks of Georgian monasticism. The Phokas family appear to have cultivated relations with the Iberians partly as a counter-weight

[818] *History of Sharvān*, 15, 38 (ed. Minorsky, pp. 20, 21; trans., pp. 31–32, 47); J. Shepard, 'Yngvarr's Expedition to the East and a Russian Inscribed Stone Cross', *Saga-Book*, 21:3–4 (1984–5), pp. 222–92.
[819] Ibn Ḥawqal, *Surāt al-arḍ*, ed. Kramers, p. 393; on Samandar, in Dagestan: cf. §2.4 above.
[820] T.M. Kalinina, 'Svedeniia Ibn Khaukalia o pokhodakh Rusi vremen Sviatoslava', *DGVE 1975* (1976), pp. 92–101. Likhachev's edition of *PVL*, which is based upon the Laurentian MS, gives the reading: 'одолѣ Святлославъ козаромъ и градъ ихъ **и** Бѣлу Вежю взя' ('Sviatoslav overcame the Khazars and their city **and** took Bela Vezha'), which Minorsky took as evidence that both Itil and Sarkel are referred to. However, Ostrowski's interlinear collation of the different MSS demonstrates that the reading of the earlier editions should be preferred: 'одолѣ Святлославъ козаромъ и градъ ихъ Бѣлу Вежю взя' ('Sviatoslav overcame the Khazars and took their city Bela Vezha'): *PVL,* ed. Likhachev, i, p. 47; Minorsky, *History of Sharvān*, p. 113 n. 3; *PVL*, ed. Ostrowski, p. 432.

to the Armenian family networks of other powerful members of the Byzantine military aristocracy.[821] The treatise 'On Skirmishing', attributed to Nikephoros, but probably commissioned by his brother Leo shortly after the emperor's murder on the instructions of the partly Armenian John Tzimiskes, warns that Armenians cannot be relied upon to carry out sentry duty 'because they are Armenians'.[822] Nikephoros Phokas granted land to Davit' of Tao, whom he made *kouropalatēs* in 966, in the 'upper country', in exchange for which several young men from the aristocracy of Tao, including Euthymios, future hegumen of the Iviron Monastery, were sent to Constantinople.[823] The area granted to Davit' is specifically discussed in *DAI* with reference to a chrysobull sent by Ašot *kouropalatēs* to Romanos Lekapenos, and drawn up by Zourbanelis *protospatharios*. A marginal note in the original copyist's hand in the Paris MS of *DAI* specifies that the same Zourbanelis (Č'ordvaneli) was the father of 'Tornikios the abbot and now *synkellos*'.[824] Tornik', who may have been related by marriage to Euthymios's father, was a soldier and a rich man. Euthymios's father, Abulherit, was a *mt'avari* loyal to Davit' of Tao, who had taken the monastic name of John at the monastery of the Four Churches in Tao.[825] He subsequently moved to Constantinople, where he was reunited with Euthymios, and moved together with his son first to Olympos, and then to Athos, where he encountered Nikephoros Phokas himself.[826] Tornik' also had taken monastic vows, and the name of John, at some point in the 960s, and joined John the Iberian and Euthymios on Mount Athos to establish the Iviron monastery there in 970s: he would later be called away from his monastic calling by Basil Lekapenos in order to help Davit' of Tao defeat the Skleros revolt.[827]

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[821] J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (Paris, 1990), pp. 324–9; the Phokas family may also have had Iberian origins themselves: id., 'Les Phocas', in id., *La socieťé byzantine. L'apport des sceaux* (2 vols., Paris, 2008), ii, p. 473.
[822] 'On Skirmishing', 2, lines 11–12 (ed. Dennis, p. 152).
[823] *Life of SS John and Euthymius*, 7 (tr. B. Martin-Hisard, pp. 87–8).
[824] *DAI,* 45, line 103, p. 210; ib., p. 20: Οὗτο(ς) (ἐστὶν) Ζουρβανέλ(ης) ὁ π(ατ)ὴρ τοῦ Τορνίκη τ(οῦ) ἀβᾶ ἀρτ(ίως) συγκέλλου; not before 979, when Tornikios was made *synkellos*: ib., p. 19.
[825] *Life of SS John and Euthymius*, 6 (tr. B. Martin-Hisard, pp. 86–7).
[826] *Actes d'Iviron*, i (1985), 6, line 12, p. 138; *Life of SS John and Euthymius*, 7 (tr. B. Martin-Hisard, pp. 87–8).
[827] *Life of SS John and Euthymius*, 8-10 (tr. B. Martin-Hisard, pp. 88–90).

The networks of aristocratic families and new monastic foundations that had begun to develop in Tao-Klarjet'i in the previous century were now enjoying an empire-wide influence.[828] The conditions within the empire that facilitated this rise were connected with the changing shape of both the army and the church. The increasing employment of *tagmata* and mercenary trops, at the expense of the traditional thematic *dynatoi*, and the flourishing of the 'semi-eremitical style of monasticism', above all on the model of the Great Lavra on Athos (of which he was a generous patron), were trends actively, and controversially, promoted by Nikephoros Phokas.[829] Nikephoros Phokas issued legislation attacking the growing wealth of monastic houses, but made an exception for 'those who wish to found cells or the so-called *lavrae* in deserted regions'.[830] Aristocratic families in Tao-Klarjet'i were well placed to exploit these developments, even as they aimed to insert their own kinship networks, and to amass significant landed wealth through their new monastic foundations. The fact that Athanasios was himself of Trapezuntine extraction, and his mother from Egrisi (then part of the kingdom of Abkhazia) was without a doubt a factor, as were the wider links of the Phokas family with Chaldia.[831]

These trends extended beyond Tao-Klarjet'i and Trebizond to the North Caucasus. We have already seen that the ninth century Abkhaz kings were anxious to sponsor their own monasteries on the model of those established in Klarjet'i, and that they were active in patronising the Greek-speaking church of the north-west of their kingdom as well as the Georgian-speaking foundations subordinate to Mtskhet'a. It appears relations between the two hierarchies could be quite fluid: an inscription from the church of Išxani in Tao-Klarjet'i, dated to 932, says that a Georgian priest, Stepane, was sent by the Bagrationi princes to 'Trebizond in Greece' (Saberdznet's Trapezont'a),

[828] *Actes d'Iviron,* i (1985), pp. 13–22.
[829] R. Morris, 'The Two Faces of Nikephoros Phokas', *BMBS* 12 (1988), pp. 99–107; M. Whittow, *Making*, pp. 349–53.
[830] *Land Legislation*, J, §4 (tr. McGeer, p.96); Zepos (ed.), *JGR*, i, p. 252; P. Charanis, 'The Monastic Properties and the State in the Byzantine Empire', *DOP*, 4 (1948), pp. 55–9.
[831] *Actes d'Iviron*, i (1985), pp.19–22; *PmbZ* #20670.

rather than Mtskhet'a, to be consecrated as a bishop by the 'Patriarch Basil'.[832] The Abkhaz kings in turn helped support the development of the mission in Alania. The specifically monastic character of this missionary activity is clear from the letters of Nicholas Mystikos referring to the role of Euthymios, and from the recurrence of the formula 'monk and metropolitan' on the seals of the subsequent metropolitans of Alania in the tenth and eleventh centuries.[833] The sending of resources from Byzantium to support the development of the Alan mission, and in particular, the renovation of the Senty Church, on a mountain overlooking the Teberda valley, corresponds closely to the form of piety that Nikephoros Phokas most favoured. The Alans could provide Nikephoros with a valuable source of mercenary fighting power, as well as an opportunity to support the spread of a particular type of spirituality to the very edge of the world known to the Byzantines.

If there were features of Nikephoros II Phokas's own intellectual and social formation that predisposed him to a rather different approach to the army, the church and the wider world, from that espoused by Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, there were also important continuities. On deposing the Lekapenids, Constantine had brought the Phokades and Maleïnoi back to power, and had removed important allies of Romanos of Armenian extraction, such as Kourkouas.[834] Athanasios had been appointed a *didaskalos* in Constantinople under Constantine.[835] Nikephoros Phokas's own rise to power was made possible by the eunuch Basil Lekapenos, the illegitimate son of Romanos I and Constantine VII's *parakoimōmenos* ('chamberlain'). Basil Lekapenos was rewarded with the title of *proedros* for playing this role.[836] Basil provides a crucial link between

[832] W. Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historic Tao, Klarjeti and Šavšeti* (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 210–11; A. Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia* (Pennsylvania, 1998), pp. 226–7.
[833] e.g. EVCTPA-TIW MONAX, - S ΜΡΟΠΟΛΙ-TH ALANI-AC: seal dated by Zacos to first half of eleventh century: Seibt, *Metropoliten*, pp. 52–4; another 'monk and metropolitan' attested for first half of eleventh century: Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, tab. 2, p. 65.
[834] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, p. 325.
[835] *PmbZ* #20670; Morris, 'Two Faces', p. 101.
[836] Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, pp. 258–9; tr. Cheynet, p. 218; *De cerem.* i, 96, pp. 433–40; Leo the Deacon, iii, 9 (ed. Hase, p. 49); Oikonomidès, *Listes*, B, p. 245, line 3; S, p. 263, line 10; pp. 240–1, 259, 292; W.G. Brokkaar 'Basil Lacapenus. Byzantium in the Tenth Century', *Studia Byzatnina et Neohellenica Neerlandica*, ed. W.F. Bakker, A.F. van Gemert, W.J. Aerts (Leiden, 1972), pp. 218–19.

the 'encyclopedic' or 'florilegic' activities initiated during the reign of Constantine VII, and the reign of Nikephoros Phokas. Many of the works attributed to or commissioned by Constantine appear to have been completed under the patronage of Basil Lekapenos. Németh has demonstrated how Basil Lekapenos supervised the production of the surviving luxury manuscripts containing the *Excerpta Historica*, which, as we have seen, was a crucial repository for information about the Alans.[837] His role in the making of the Leipzig manuscript of *De ceremoniis* is well known.[838] Brokkaar suggested that Basil Lekapenos, who was tutor to Romanos II, may also have been played a role in both the original compilation of *DAI*, and the redaction that underlies the surviving manuscript.[839] The marginal reference to John Tornikios, whom Basil Lekapenos had recalled from Mount Athos in order to send to fight against Skleros, is an additional indication that Basil may have had a hand in the late tenth century redaction of *DAI*. The material on the Alans presented in an earlier part of this chapter thus belongs to a body of material that was of continuing interest to a figure at the very centre of Nikephoros Phokas's imperial administration.

The account of Epiphanios of Kallistratou's travels along the Black Sea coast, and Nicholas Mystikos's Alan dossier appear to have been read and copied by another figure closely associated with Basil Lekapenos. Symeon Metaphrastes specifically used Epiphanios's version for his *Hypomnēma* of St. Andrew in his Menologion, including the reference to Andrew's conversion of the land of the Alans, prior to his journey to the Abasgians, Zikhians and Bosporans.[840] Symeon was a common name in the tenth century, and it is likely that more than one held the office of

[837] Németh, 'Imperial Systematization', pp. 99–101.
[838] Introduction to *De cerem*, ed. Moffatt and Tall, pp. xxiii–xxx; J.M. Featherstone, 'Basileios Nothos as Compiler: The *De ceremoniis* and *Theophanes Continuatus*', in I. Perez-Martin and J. Signes Codoñer (eds.), *The Transmission of Byzantine Texts: Between Textual Criticism and Quellenforschung*, ed. I. Perez-Martin, J. Signes (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 355 – 74.
[839] Brokkaar, 'Basil Lacapenus, p. 234; on the Paris manuscript of *DAI*, and its subsequent history (in particular, with respect ot the straits of Kerch): B. Mondrain, 'La lecture du *De administrando imperio* à Byzance au cours des siècles', *TM*, 14 (2002), p. 491; J. Shepard, 'Mingling with Northern Barbarians: Advantages and Perils', in F. Curta and B.-P. Maleon (eds.), *The Steppe Lands and the World Beyond Them* (Iaşi, 2013), p. 230.
[840] Symeon Metaphrastes, *Hypomnema of St. Andrew*, esp. ch. 14, 23–5 (ed. Vinogradov, pp. 51–3, 233, 236).

logothetēs. It is not clear, for instance, whether the author of the chronicle attributed to a Symeon the *logothetēs* should be linked with the compiler of the menologion, referred to in the colophon of the earliest dated manuscript (1042 CE) as Symeon *magistros* and *logothetēs tou dromou*, or with another Symeon who had served as *asekretis* under Leo VI, and later as *logothetēs tou stratiotikou* under Constantine VII.[841] However, it does seem the Symeon *patrikios* and *protoasekretis* who drew up novels for Romanos II and Nikephoros II, including Nikephoros's Novel on monastic properties, who was on the regency council in 963 and whom Liudprand of Cremona described following him, 'howling' excuses in June 968, can all probably be linked with Symeon Metaphrastes.[842] It appears his career was linked with that of Basil *parakoimōmenos*: the ban imposed by Basil II on the Metaphrastic menologion mirrors the *damnatio memoriae* imposed works associated by Basil Lekapenos, including the *Excerpta*, after the latter's fall.[843] Basil *parakoimōmenos* may even have commissioned the Menologion.[844]

For Symeon to carry out his hagiographic compilation, he may well have needed access to the patriarchal archive. The *Life* immediately preceding Andrew in the Menologion (30 November) is that of Stephen the Younger (28 November), the author of whose *Life* may have been the *chartophylax* of the patriarchate.[845] This may in turn explain how it came about that the manuscript *Patmos 706* misattributed a whole series of Nicholas Mystikos's letters concerning the Alan mission to Symeon *magistros* and *logothetēs tou dromou*: the latter had been copied by or for Symeon, reflecting the interest in the Alans that he showed in his Menologion, and that his patron, Basil Lekapenos, had shown through the many works he had compiled, copied and

[841] C. Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes. Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen, 2002), pp. 62–87; Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon*, pp. 1*-8*; W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (New York, 2013), pp. 203–17.
[842] *Land Legislation*, J, K (tr. McGeer, pp. 90 n.1, 92, 99); Zepos (ed.), *JGR*, i, pp. 249, 253; Liudprand, *Relatio,* 19 (ed. Chiesa, p. 195, line 307; tr. Squatriti, p. 250); Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, pp. 77–80.
[843] Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, p. 69–70; Németh, 'Imperial Systematization', p. 101; cf. *Land Legislation,* O, §VI.1 (tr. McGeer, pp. 128–131); Zepos (ed.), *JGR*, i, pp. 263–6.
[844] P. Magdalino, 'Byzantine Encyclopedism of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', in König and Woolf (eds.), *Encyclopedism,* pp. 222–3.
[845] Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes,* p. 189; cf. §5.2 above.

completed. It is not necessary to accept Darrouzès's argument that Symeon Metaphrastes had been Nicholas's secretary as a young man to understand the connection between Symeon and the Nicholas's Alan dossier.[846] The different types of knowledge that had been produced over the centuries in Byzantium about the Alans – by historians, envoys, writers of protocol, itinerant monks and patriarchs – were being gathered in to be put at the disposal of the imperial administration precisely at the time that the unnamed *apokrisiarios* made his journey to the Senty Church above the Teberda valley.

5.10. (Part III) Churches and landscape in the Zelenchuk valley

In the final section of this chapter, we return to the landscape of the North-West Caucasus itself. Nizhnii Arkhyz, west of the Teberda valley where the Senty Church is located, was the site of significant settlement which contained a series of Middle Byzantine-style churches and chapels (Maps I, V). The size of two of the churches in particular, has led to the site's identification as the seat of the archbishop of Alania. Nizhnii Arkhyz stretched for 2.5 km along the right bank of the river Bol'shoi Zelenchuk and covered a total of 63 ha, if the agricultural plots within a set of outer defensive walls are included.[847] The site reveals that the development of new forms of aristocratic power that we have seen in the Teberda valley, and the Kislovodsk Basin, dating from the tenth century were not isolated phenomena.

The settlement was naturally defended by the steep forested slopes of the mountain valley, but it was fortified with a series of stone walls defending the valley from the north and the south, in

[846] J. Darrouzès (ed.), *Épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle* (Paris, 1960), pp. 9–20, 33–8; Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 204. There is an alternative possibility, hinging on the reference to the appointment of a bishop Theodegios in Symeon's Letter No. 4 (dated by Darrouzès post-981), that the whole of the Patmos collection could be connected with a different Symeon, active in the first half of the tenth century. The evidence is not conclusive, but even if Høgel's argument is accepted, the implication would still be that copies of Nicholas's letters belonged in the collection of someone who rose to a senior government post by the mid-tenth century: Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, pp. 81–5.
[847] V.A. Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz v X–XII vekakh* (Stavropol, 1993), pp. 12–13.

addition to additional free-standing towers, including above the 'North Zelenchuk Church'.[848] A space between the most northerly wall and a second defensive wall was cleared of rocks for ploughing.[849] The North Zelenchuk Church was surrounded by a series of chapels, domestic buildings, and two Christian cemeteries. A heavy mill-stone on the bank of a stream flowing past the church towards the Bol'shoi Zelenchuk may have once belonged to a water-mill.[850] A further agricultural plot separated the agglomeration of buildings around the North Church from the heart of the settlement at Nizhnii Arkhyz, which began from the large Middle Zelenchuk Church. There were three main street and a section of the settlement, presumably inhabited by the elite, was protected by further walls.[851] Within the latter section, an urban household, consisting of two multi-room buildings, and a single-apse chapel. Numerous finds of glass bracelets and high-quality ceramics, including significant quantities of amphorae, indicate the wealth of the inhabitants. The earliest phases may be dated to the tenth century.[852] One of the buildings housed its own smithy.[853]

The three largest and best preserved churches at Nizhnii Arkhyz are conventionally known as the North, Middle and South Zelenchuk Churches (Figs.5.6–5.8). In the 1880s, Russian Orthodox monks from Mount Athos, with government support, established a Russian monastery on the site, in a region by then inhabited by Muslim Karachai.[854] In the process, they significantly Russified the appearance of the Middle and South churches; Soviet-era 'restoration' of the Middle church corrected this, but also further altered the fabric of the building in the process. The original buildings all had three rounded apses and domes. The North and South Churches were built on cross-in-square plans; the Middle Church was built on modified cross-domed (*croix libre*)

[848] Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 17, 76–82.
[849] Analysis by the soil scientist A.I. Romashkevich concluded the soil would have been suitable for agricultural exploitation in the tenth century: Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, p. 14.
[850] Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 14–17.
[851] Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 17–22.
[852] Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 27–63.
[853] Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 30–5.
[854] Kuznetsov, *Drevnosti Arkhyza i Kiafara*, p. 31; cf. §1.1 above.

plan. The North and Middle Churches are similar in size, and both fairly substantial: for comparison, the diameter of the dome of the Middle Church (3.9 m) is exactly equal to that of the contemporary masonry church at Çanli Kilise in Cappadocia. The South Church, which is smaller.[855]

The three open vestibules on the north, south and west sides of the North Church recall a feature that we have already seen at Senty. The vestibules make a visual statement, accentuating the cruciform shape of church such as Senty, or lending a similar appearance to the exterior of cross-in-square churches such as the North Church or the Shoana Church above the Kuban.[856] Niches in the east walls of the north and south porches at the North Church point to a liturgical function. [857] The use of three vestibules is particularly characteristic of Abkhazian church architecture of the period, and the North Church particularly closely resembles the church associated with the palace complex at Lykhny in Abkhazia.[858] There has been some discussion in the literature about the direction of the influence of the three-vestibule form, which is also found in Trebizond, and, in a slightly different form in K'art'li.[859] It would certainly not be surprising if Abkhazian churches served as the model for the builders of some of the Alan churches, or if the master builders were themselves from Abkhazia, perhaps even sent by the Abkhaz rulers, providing the kind of material

[855] V.A. Kuznetsov, 'Severnyi Zelenchukskii khram X veka', *SA* (1964), 4, pp. 136–50; id., 'Srednii Zelechukskii khram', *SA* (1968), 3, pp. 137–47; 'Iuzhnyi Zelenchukskii khram', *SA* (1971), 1, pp. 238–44; id., *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 87–93; Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz i Senty*, pp. 67–178, 288–94, 300–7.
[856] On Shoana see: Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz i Senty*, pp. 294–300.
[857] L. A. Perifil'eva, 'K voprosu o vizantiiskom vliaynii na kul'tovuiu arkhitekturu severo-zapadnogo Kavkaza X-XI vekov', *Alany, Zapandnaia Evropa i Vizantiia*, ed. V. Kh. Tmenov (Vladikavkaz, 1992), p. 180.
[858] D.K. Chachkalia, *Trekhpritvornaia kompozitsiia khramov srednevekovoi Abkhazii* (Moscow, 2016); an inscription in the Lykhny Church referring to Giorgi I (d. 1027) provides a *terminus ante quem*: L.G. Khrushkova, *Lykhny: srednevokvyi dvortsovyi kompleks v Abkhazii* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 57–61; id., *Les Monuments Chrétiens,* pp. 116–17; cf. the church at Veseloe, near Sochi, dated by its investigators to the first half of the tenth century, which is especially similar to the North Zelenchuk Church: E.A. Armachuk, R.A. Mimokhod and V.V. Sedov, 'Khristianskii khram u pos. Veseloe: predvaritel'naia publikatsiia rezultatov raskopok 2010 g.', *RA* (2012), 3, pp. 78–90.
[859] The Church of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, which has a similar plan, is thirteenth century, but may follow the plan of an earlier building. In any case, we have already seen (cf. §5.9 above) that ideas were moving between Trebizond, Georgia and Abkhazia in several different directions already in the ninth and tenth centuries: S. Balllance, 'The Architecture', and D.T. Rice, 'The Excavations', in D.T. Rice (ed.), *The Church of Hagia Sophia at Trebizond* (Edinburgh, 1968), pp. 21–5, 34–6, 37–8; Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, p. 93; Perifil'eva, 'K voprosu', pp. 180–201; Chahkalia, *Trekhpritvornaia kompozitsiia*, pp. 113–14.

assistance for missionary activity in Alania (and thereby perhaps a means of influencing their powerful neighbours) alluded to by Nicholas Mystikos.[860]

The chronology and respective functions of the North and Middle Zelenchuk Churches has been a further point of debate. Kuznetsov argued the North Church preceded the Middle Church, and was the cathedral church of the Archbishop of Alania, located in a separate 'eparchal setttlement'; the Middle Church, he argued, was a monastic church serving the population of Nizhnii Arkhyz, which was possibly built later. The dating of the church to before the mid-eleventh century, at least, appears secure. A cross with nail-holes through which it had presumably been attached to the wall, was found in the narthex with a Greek inscription dated to 1066/1067 referring to its 'renovation', implying it had been there for some time before that; a further stone cross with a Greek inscription and a date of 1013 was found in the cemetery that had been established around the church. A stone coffin in the south-east wall of the church included a seal inscribed in Arabic with the name of the Armenian king Ashot, son of Smbat (886–91), against whom, as we have seen, an Alan *mt'avar* was fighting in the 880s.[861]

Beletskii and Vinogradov propose the reverse relationship between the two churches. The separation of the North Church from the rest of the settlement would suggest it was better suited to a monastic function. The size of the Middle Church, and its location in the centre of the settlement speaks in favour of its identification as the cathedral of the archbishop. There are no definitive indications for the dating of the Middle Church, but Beletskii and Vinogradov refer to architectural and iconographic parallels with Nikephoros Phokas's church at Tokali Kilise to suggest a mid-tenth century date for the church's completion. Meanwhile, they connect the

[860] cf. §5.4 above.
[861] Kuznetsov, 'Severnyi khram', pp. 148–9.

evidence for a transformation of the plan of the church with a break in construction, or even destruction, linked to the expulsion of the Byzantine churchmen from the region in around 932.[862]

The growth of a settlement on this scale depended upon a process of agricultural intensification beyond that already seen within the defensive walls. The evidence can be found higher up the Arkhyz Basin to the south of the settlement. In 1964, Vladimir Kuznetsov noticed piles of rocks suggestive of deliberate clearing of fields in sections of the basin now covered in forest or meadow. In the same survey, he found traces of terracing on the slopes of the basin, stone walls perpendicular to the valley, suggesting anti-landslide breaks, and evidence of drainage canals. An endemic form of *secale kuprijanovii*, 'Arkhyz rye', appears to have been cultivated. Kuznetsov also mentioned traces of groups of small cut stone buildings at a few locations in the basin, although detailed survey work has not been carried out here. Paths lead down from the basin to the settlement of Nizhnii Arkhyz, several kilometres below.[863] Kuznetsov's suggestive observations about historic agriculture in the Arkhyz basin await further investigation, although the forested landscape of the Arkhyz basin clearly does not lend itself to the kind of aerial archaeology that used for the Kislovodsk basin. Nonetheless, evidence for intensification of agriculture in the Arkhyz basin in relation to the growth of a major settlement at Nizhnii Arkhyz in the tenth century, suggests parallel with the developments we saw occurring in the Kislovodsk Basin in the same period.

Byzantine Christianity, aided by Abkhazian intermediaries, appears to have played an important part in the crystalisation of an Alan aristocracy in the tenth century. However, even at Nizhnii Arkhyz, the likely residence of the archbishop of Alania, we find patterns of belief and political and social organisation that bear little resemblance to Byzantine norms. Non-Christian burial practices, including furnished rock-burial inhumations containing people dressed in silks,

[862] Beletskii and Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 173–8.
[863] Arkhiv IA, R-1:2915, pp. 182–210.

continued during the functioning of Nizhnii Arkhyz as a Christian centre.[864] A small, two-roomed structure, oriented NW-SE, on the hill above the North Church, containing ceramics characteristic of the tenth to twelfth centuries, as well as many small crosses pierced, apparently for nailing to a wooden structure, appears to have functioned as a shrine connected with pre-Christian beliefs.[865] A very large ring (diameter 88.5 m) surrounded by a drystone wall near the Middle Church in the heart of the settlement, where excavations have revealed traces of charcoal, has also been attributed with a cult function.[866] Irina Arzhantseva has written on the fortress of Kiafar, just a few kilometres from Nizhnii Arkhyz, and apparently the site of a royal tomb in the eleventh century, where what appear to be sacrificial stones, marked with petroglyphs, located near to a small chapel, may provide further evidence of the syncretic beliefs of the Alans.[867] However provisional the reconstruction of the details of belief-systems from such evidence may have to be, it is clear that this was a world where the, 'habits which conduce to the more pagan character of those who indulged in them', persisted among the *dynatoi*.[868]

[864] Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 117–56; on the rock burials at Nizhnii Arkhyz, see: §4.2 above.
[865] Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 102–4.
[866] Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz*, pp. 106–12.
[867] I.A. Arzhantseva, 'The Christianization of the North Caucasus (Religious Dualism amon the Alans), in W. Seibt (ed.), *Die Christianisierung des Kaukasus* (Vienna, 2002), pp. 23–6; on the religious beliefs of the Alans, see: Z.Kh. Albegova, 'Palaeosotsiologicheskoe issledovanie religii alan V–XII vv.' (IA RAN, Moscow, Dissertation – Candidate of Science, 2000).
[868] Nicholas, *Letters*, Ep. 52, pp. 284–6; cf. §5.4 above.

CONCLUSION

Leo the *spatharios* managed to return from his adventures in the Caucasus unscathed, but other representatives of Byzantine/Roman imperialism were not so fortunate. The sixth-century historian Agathias describes a mission by the general Soterikhos in the 550s CE to distribute money [χρυσίον] to the peoples living to the north of Lazika (Map I). The passage shortly follows a discussion of the royal insignia, including a robe of gold cloth, scarlet shoes and a turban, with which the Lazikan ruler Tzathes had been invested on a visit to Constantinople.[869] Soterikhos came to the land of the Misimians, who like the Apsilians, were nominally part of the Lazikan Empire, and were seen in such terms in Constantinople, but also maintained their own 'language and customs'. The Misimians became convinced that Soterikhos intended to betray their fortress of Boukhloos to the Alans:

> The idea behind this, they thought, was that the envoys from the more distant peoples could all congregate there and collect their pay so that whoever brought the money [τὰ χρήματα] would henceforth be spared the necessity of travelling round the foot-hills of the Caucasus and setting out in person to meet them.[870]

Misimian envoys informed Soterikhos that while they were prepared to pay tribute, they would not tolerate him 'loitering' on their territory. Soterikhos was outraged that a Roman should be addressed in such a way, and had the envoys savagely beaten. The Misimians responded by ambushing the general and killing him, his sons, and almost everyone else encamped with them. Agathias was shocked:

> After doing this the inhuman wretches despoiled the dead men, taking away with them everything else that the place contained and even appropriating the Emperor's money. Altogether they acted as though the men they had killed were really their enemies and not the general and other representatives of a friendly power.[871]

[869] Agathias, *The Histories*, iii, ch. 15.2 (ed. Keydell, p.103).
[870] id., iii, ch. 15.6–8 (ed. Keydell, pp. 103–4; tr. Frendo, p. 85).
[871] id., iii, ch. 16.1–9 (ed. Keydell, pp. 104–5; tr. Frendo, pp. 85–6).

The Misimian perspective is instructive. A demand for tribute, or the nominal recognition of the authority of Lazikan or Roman rulers was one thing; the presence of foreign armies, and the dispersal of wealth to neighbouring peoples (not least, the Alans) without first consulting with the Misimians was another. It was the latter that fundamentally threatened their social autonomy, and the arrogance shown by Soterikhos symbolised this.

This thesis has approached the early medieval North Caucasus from the perspective of neighbouring imperial powers, and – through archaeology – from within. Throughout the period, highlanders were often able to maintain a large degree of social autonomy from the agrarian empires of the Near East and the nomadic hegemons of the steppes to the north. They constantly flicker in and out of sight in the written sources produced at the heart of empires. This is partly a function of the social memory of the imperial elites at the end of Late Antiquity. The region was a classic site for the description of the limits of imperial power. The memory of Sasanian frontier management had ideological significance for elites at the heart of the 'Abbāsid court and its administration, and for ambitious local rulers in the South Caucasus (§2.3). The collection of information on the North Caucasus (and the Alans in particular) in the Byzantine court in the tenth century was part of a wider to project to associate knowledge with the emperor (§5.5) after a long period of eclipse by other centres (such as the Church (§§5.2, 5.4), or the rival court of the caliphs). However, there were also more utilitarian reasons for the interest of imperial elites in the region, connected with their conceptions of its strategic geography, and the resources, including human labour, that they could draw from it (§§2.5–6, 5.6, 5.9).

Three models have been useful for analysing the interactions between the highlanders of the early medieval North Caucasus, the nomadic peoples of the steppe and the empires of Byzantium and the caliphate. James Scott's model of 'Zomia' enables us to approach the linguistic and cultural diversity of the North Caucasus frequently mentioned in the Byzantine and Arabic sources (§§2.3, 5.5), the patterns of dispersed settlement (§§3.5, 3.6) and the elusive nature of highlander

social hierarchies and ethnic identities (*passim*) as a historical phenomenon, rather than a given: as the product of conscious social strategies to evade state-building projects. Richard White's model of 'the Middle Ground' foregrounds the manner in which contact zones, where direct forms of imperial dominance are considered impossible or undesirable, force people from radically different backgrounds to find means of cultural communication (§4.3). Meanwhile, Carolyn Nordstrom's model of the 'shadow economy' simultaneously highlights the inequalities that may still lurk in the background, and provides a way of understanding the linkages between official corruption (§§2.5, 5.6), smuggling (§4.4) and local subsistence economies (§3.6).

Chapter two approached the North Caucasus from the point of view of the 'official mind' based at the heart of the 'Abbāsid administration. It argued that while al-Balādhurī's chapter on the *Futūḥ Armīnīya* is an unreliable source for the early engagements between Muslim armies and the Khazars (§2.4), its value to the modern historian lie instead in the vision of Sasanian imperialism in the north (§2.3), and the attempt to locate the North Caucasian hinterland within the wider political economy of the 'Abbāsid state (§§2.2, 2.6). Al-Balādhurī shows how, in the late Umayyad period, tributary relations were established between the highlanders and the city of Bāb al-Abwāb, involving the delivery of slave girls and boys; we considered the legacies of such relationships within the commercial networks of the Caspian region. Al-Balādhurī also shows the patterns of private landownership established on the frontier by Umayyad governors (§2.5), and the attempts by the 'Abbāsid government to harness some of the wealth of the Khazar pastoral economy, as well as the revenues obtained from other resources, such as naphtha (§2.6).

While al-Balādhurī provides a view from the outside, the archaeology of the Kislovodsk Basin provided a view from within North Caucasus. The Kislovodsk Basin lay beyond the reach of Sasanian, Roman or 'Abbāsid power, but was more vulnerable to demands for tribute from the nomadic powers to the north (§3.1). Ecologically-informed traditions within Russian scholarship provided useful tools for analysis (§3.2). However, a tendency to invoke mass migration as an

explanation was challenged (§3.4). The evidence of cemeteries (§3.5), settlements (§3.6) and patterns of agricultural development (§3.7) was used. From the fifth until the eighth centuries, elite groups controlled a small number of key fortresses in the Kislovodsk Basin, and reflected their elite status through the burial rites at a special plot within one cemetery in particular. These drew on the material culture of the nomadic peoples of the steppes to the north, but simultaneously emphasised a local elite identity. This was not a landscape of aristocrats and dependent peasants: the basin was covered in small hill-forts, with associated agricultural plots, often at quite high altitudes. These appear to have been occupied by farmers determined to maintain their independence from local elites (Scott's 'escape agriculture'). Major disruptions in the eighth and ninth centuries, possibly connected with the establishment of Khazar hegemony, brought this social situation to an end. By the tenth century, a much more nucleated form of social organisation, involving greater degrees of direct control over human labour, had emerged.

Chapter four focused on evidence for connections between the small worlds of the North-West Caucasus and the wider world. The exceptional preservation of silk and other textiles in a series of seventh- to tenth-century burial sites in the North-West Caucasus, in particular at Moshchevaia Balka, Nizhnyi Arkhyz and Khasaut (§4.2), enabled an investigation of the means by which resources and crafted goods from distant societies could be put to local uses in the mountain valleys of the region. The chapter linked the global dynamics of commodity exchange between China and the Mediterranean with the intimate level of the burial rites for an adolescent girl in a remote mountain community. Silk could function abstractly as money or quasi-money (as stores of value, media of exchange and units of account), but its use as adornment for the living and the dead expressed concrete ideas about social identity and specific social relationships, between members of the same community, or between people from very different geographical and social locations (§4.3). The chapter argued that the distinction between the abstract and concrete properties of the silk was not between different parts of the system of circulation (§4.4), but a contradiction that faced those at both imperial centres and in the hinterland, tied up with the

visibility or invisibility of the sources of social power (§4.5). Displays of wealth from distant locations, or the sending of wealth to distant locations, could reinforce claims to legitimacy, but they could also provoke suspicion about shadow economies.

Chapter five considered the effects of Byzantine imperialism on the North-West Caucasus in the ninth and tenth centuries. Byzantine missionary activity in the region led to the conversion of the Alan ruler and the establishment of a series of Byzantine-style churches in the early tenth century, and the emergence of new settlements and forms of agricultural exploitation to support them (§5.1, 4, 8, 10). As in chapter two, sources produced in the centre of empire allowed us to ask what resources imperial elites hoped to draw from the North Caucasian hinterland, and what ends they believed were served by directing resources towards it (§5.6, 9). In chapter five, this was approached from the perspective of both sides of the 'imperial-ecclesiastical' complex. A refined dating of lists of bishops produced by the patriarchate, and of the letters of Nicholas Mystikos (table 5.1), enabled us to demonstrate how powerful Byzantine churchmen carved out their own policy with respect to the region, its Khazar hegemons and the Christian aristocracies of the South Caucasus between the late eighth and early tenth centuries (§5.2-4). While Byzantine emperors attempted to integrate Alan rulers into their political system, our non-Byzantine written sources (in Arabic, Georgian, Armenian and Hebrew) indicate that the latter could draw several different models of political culture, such as the Turkic traditions of the steppe and Sasanian legacies in the Caucasus (§5.3, 5, 7). Meanwhile, our written sources indicate that the Alans coexisted in the Caucasus with a wide range of other peoples, some of whom continued to reject the forms of authority adopted by Alan rulers (§5.7).

Al-Mas'ūdī, or his source, was full of admiration for the Circassian (Kashak) neighbours of the Alans in the Caucasus. His sexualised description of its women (with details on their 'narrow waists' and 'shapely buttocks') perhaps reflects the gaze of the slave trader who provided him with his information; details on its textile production and trade with Trebizond certainly point to

the commercial origins of his information.[872] However, he also emphasised the 'pride' of the Kashak, deriving their name from the Persian word '*kash*' for 'proud', but observed that pride alone could not defend them from their mightier Alan neighbours due to 'their neglect ('*tark*') to appoint a king to rule over them and unite their interests ("words").'[873] Al-Mas'ūdī's frustration was echoed nine hundred years later by another sympathetic outsider, the British journalist John Longworth who hoped to encourage London to intervene in the Caucasus to defend Circassian autonomy from Russia. Longworth attended a national assembly of the Circassians in 1837, where he was impressed by the experiment in direct democracy.[874] During the gathering, Longworth found himself made 'a provisional governor of the country', but rapidly discovered that, 'notwithstanding the homage paid to us, and the daily assurances of obedience and fidelity paid to us, that our royal prerogatives were of a very equivocal nature'.[875] Longworth's amusement turned to anger when he visited the region again at the beginning of the Crimean war in 1855, now on an official mission, where he complained to London in dispatch, that, as to, 'organizing anything out of this anarchy for administrative purposes, I consider such a thing as quite hopeless and out of the question'.[876]

While the Circassians may have been prepared seen Longworth as a 'representative of a friendly power' against Russian aggression, they were nonetheless not willing to let any imperial administrator undermine their right to organise themselves on their own terms either. The highlanders living in the North Caucasus in the early middle ages often found themselves faced with the dilemmas provoked by the presence of competing imperial interests, whether in the form of offers of wealth, or titles, or threats of violence. Our written and archaeological sources indicate that at least some of them chose to opt out, at least some of the time.

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[872] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17 (ed. de Meynard, p. 45–6); cf. §§4.4, 5.7 above.
[873] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ii, 17, (ed. de Meyard, p. 47).
[874] The national assembly was an innovation: earlier councils tended to be 'confined to a particular district or tribe': J.A. Longworth, *A Year Among the Circassians* (2 vols., London, 1840), i, p. 103.
[875] Longworth, *A Year,* i, p. 108.
[876] Cited in Bullough, *Let Our Fame*, p. 66.

Fig. 3.1. View to the north from Mt. Mashuk, February 2010. Photo: Evans.



Fig. 3.2. View to the south from Mt. Mashuk, September 2014. Photo: Evans.



Fig. 3.3. Klin-Yar, with Mirnyi behind. View from Vol'chi Vorota. September 2014. Photo: Evans.



Fig. 3.4. Fortified settlements in the Kislovodsk basin. Source: Afanas'ev & Korobov 2007, p. 67.

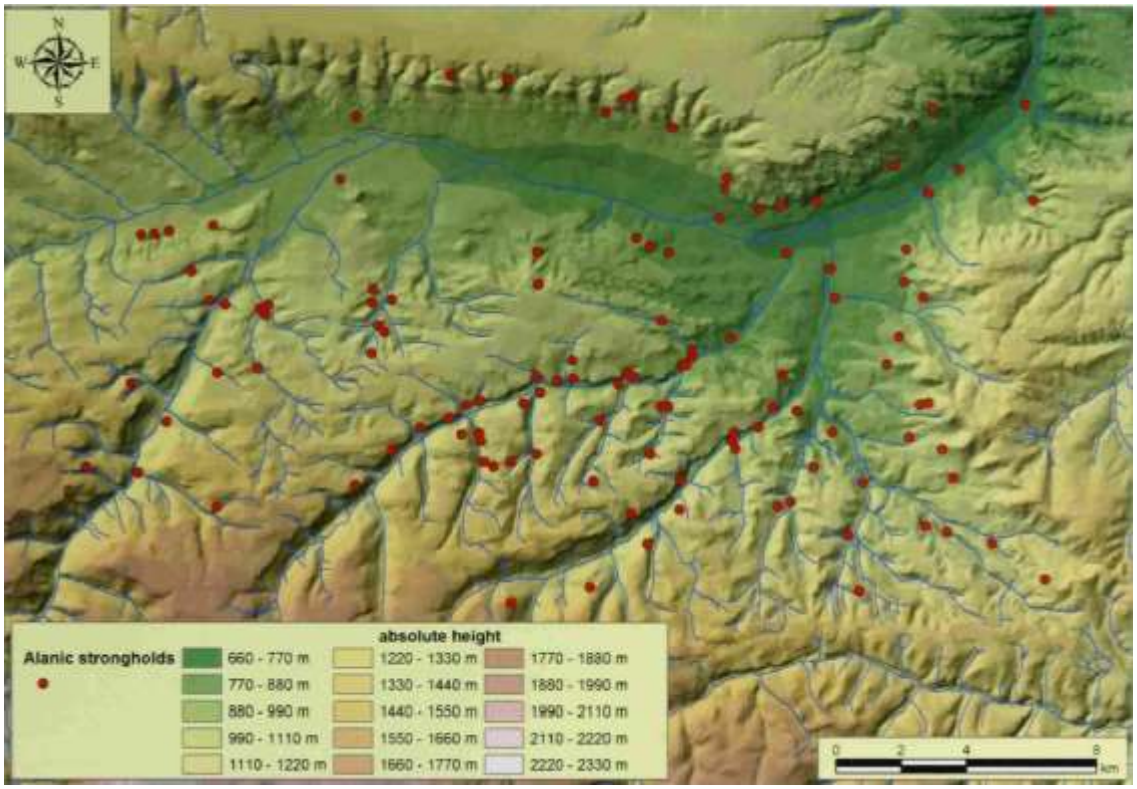

Fig. 3.5. Field types in the Kislovodsk Basin. Source: Korobov & Borisov 2012, p. 51. (1) Type-1 terraces (2) 'Strip lynchets' (3) 'Celtic fields'



1



2



3

Fig. 3.6. 'Celtic fields' at Zubchikhinskaia Balka. Source: Korobov & Borisov 2012, p. 59.



Fig. 4.1. 'Chieftain's caftan'. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Inv. 6584. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin.



Fig. 4.2. Senmūrw on St. Leu silk. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Inv. 8579-1863.



Fig. 4.3. Senmūrw on relief of Khosrow II at Tāq-e Bostān. Source: Mode 2002 (Online).



Fig. 4.4. The ambassadors from Turantash. West wall, Afrasiab. Source: Mode 2002 (Online).



Fig. 4.5. Two fragments of silk with kufic inscriptions. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Inv. 6767. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin.



Fig. 4.6. Silk ribbon with Greek inscription. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Inv. 7777.
Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin.



Fig. 4.7. The house of Colonel Kazi-Bek, early 19th century. Source: Freygang, *Letters*, p. 258.

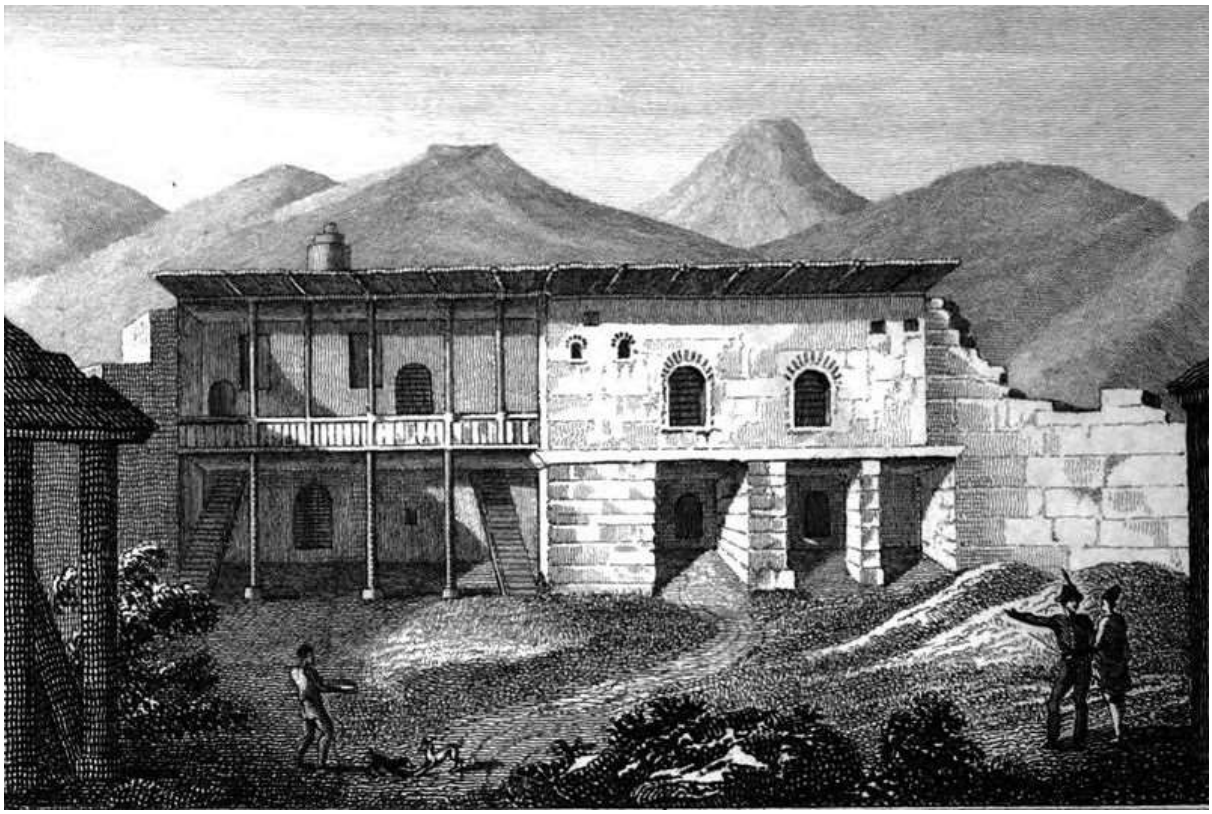

Fig. 4.8. Mikhail Lermontov, view of the Darial pass (1837). Source: WikiCommons.



Fig. 4.9. Buddhist texts found at Moshchevaia Balka. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Inv. 5121. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin.

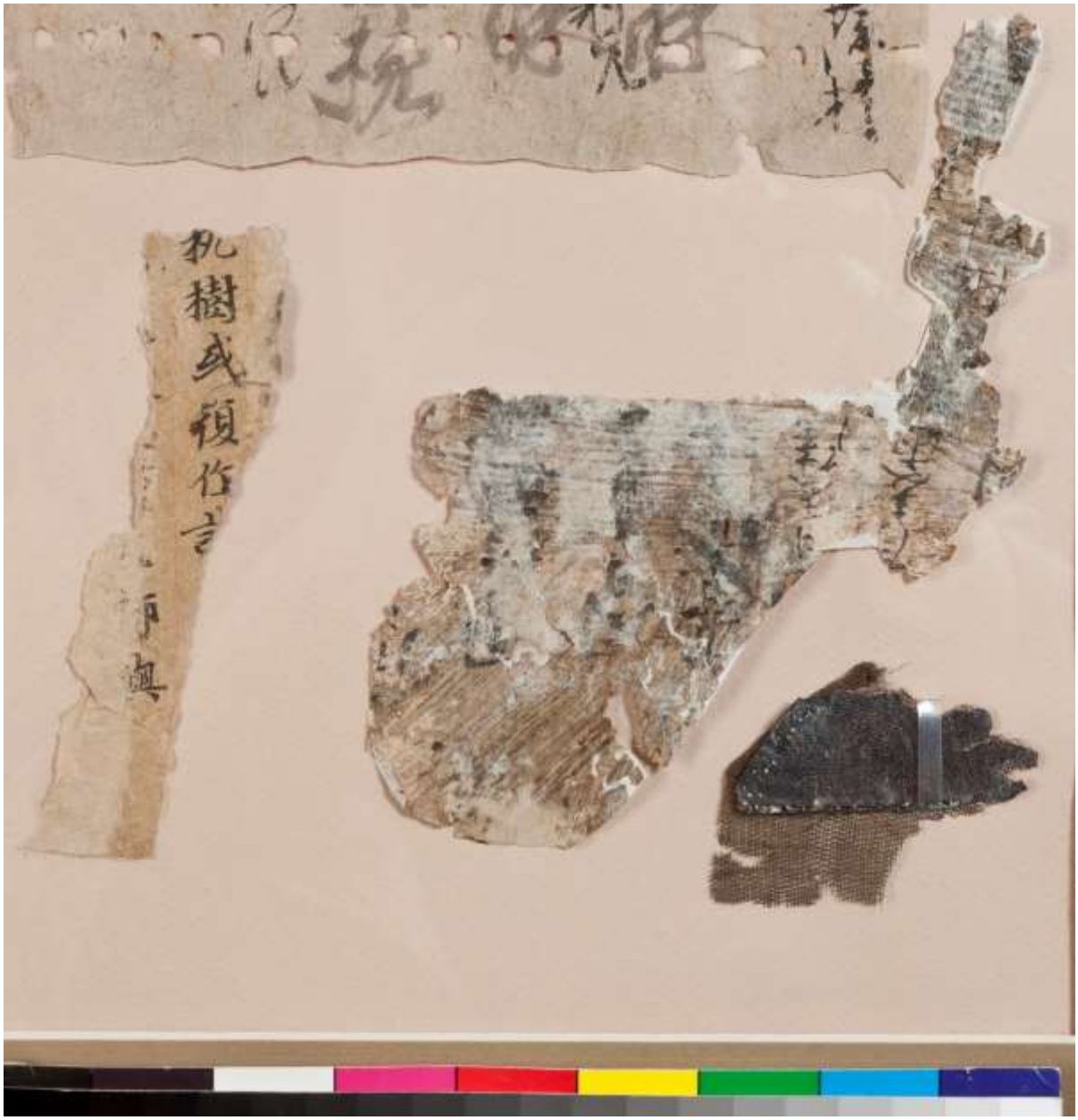

Fig. 4.10. Buddhist icon on silk found at Moshchevaia Balka. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Inv. 5121. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin.



Fig. 4.11. Chinese account document found at Moshchevaia Balka. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Inv. 5121. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin.



Fig. 5.1. Seal of Ignatios the monk and Metropolitan of Alania. Zacos (BnF) 1533.
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Fig. 5.2. Shoana Church. Photo: Evans 2009.



Fig. 5.2. Senty Church. Source: Beletskii and Vinogradov 2011, p. 367.



Fig. 5.4. Fragments of silk with gold thread from Senty. Source: Markovin 1983, p. 68.

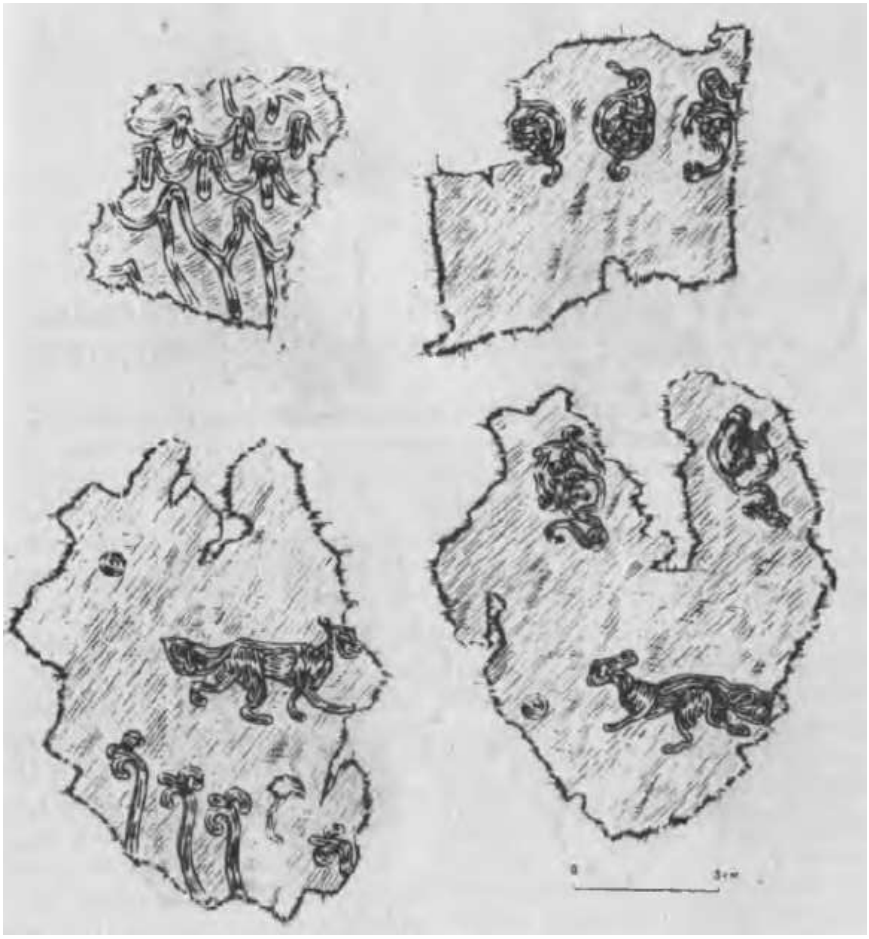

Fig. 5.5. Senty inscription, dating renovation to 965 CE.
Source: Beletskii and Vinogradov 2011, p. 242.

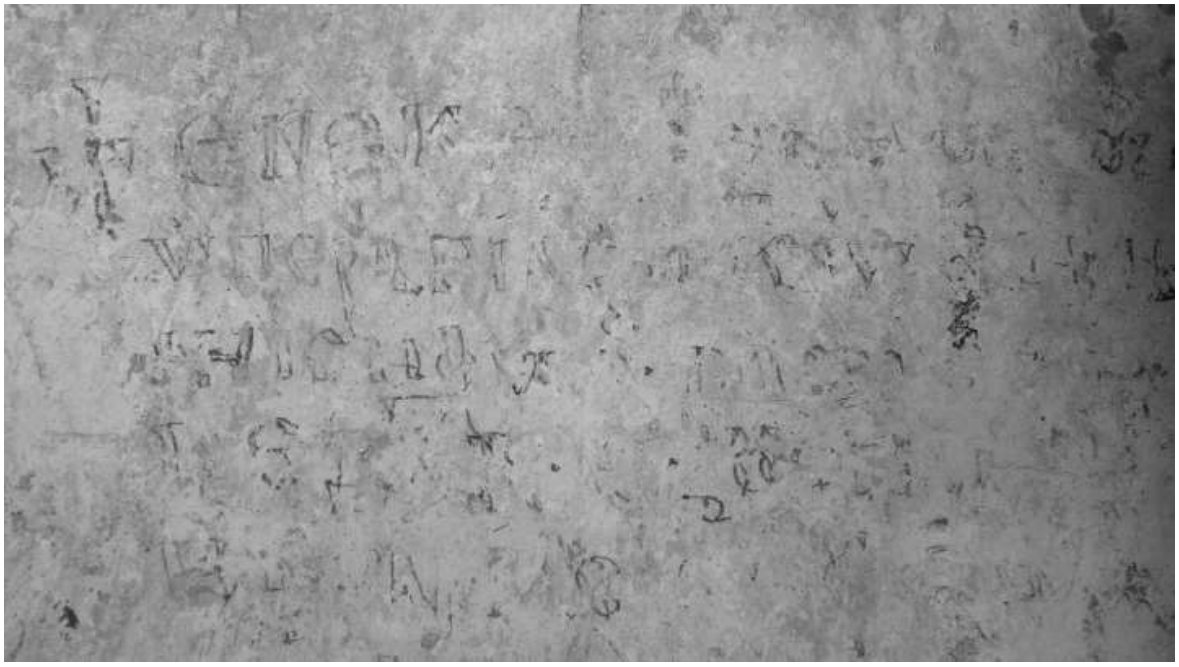

Fig. 5.6. North Zelenchuk Church. Photo: Pieklo 2009.



Fig. 5.7. Middle Zelenchuk Church. Photo: Pieklo 2009.



Fig. 5.8. Middle Zelenchuk Church, west façade in 1961.
Source: Kuznetsov 1968.



Fig. 5.9. South Zelenchuk Church. Photo: Pieklo 2009.



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