

Tagungen des
Landesmuseums für Vorgeschichte Halle (Saale)
Band 17 | 2017

Migration und Integration von der
Urgeschichte bis zum Mittelalter
Migration and Integration
from Prehistory to the Middle Ages

9. Mitteldeutscher Archäologentag
vom 20. bis 22. Oktober 2016 in Halle (Saale)
9th Archaeological Conference of Central Germany
October 20–22, 2016 in Halle (Saale)



Complex processes of migration: the south Caucasus in the early Islamic Empire (7th–10th century AD)

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In memory of Bruno Baumgartner (1941–2017)

Zusammenfassung

Komplexe Migrationsprozesse: Der südliche Kaukasus im frühislamischen Reich (7.–10. Jh. n. Chr.)

Mit der Eingliederung der südkaukasischen Reiche von Armenien, Iberien (Ostgeorgien) und Kaukasisch-Albanien in das arabische Kalifat im 7. Jh. n. Chr. begann ein sich allmählich beschleunigender Prozess der Einwanderung muslimischer Eliten (arabischer, persischer, kurdischer und zuletzt auch türkisch-zentralasiatischer Herkunft) samt ihrem Gefolge in diesen Raum, der ab dem späten 8. Jh. und im 9. Jh. n. Chr. zur Schaffung neuer islamischer Herrschaftszentren neben den Fürstentümern der einheimischen Aristokratie führte. Letztere setzte Traditionen der adeligen Mobilität insbesondere in das byzantinische Reich fort, wo armenische Krieger und Siedler eine wichtige Rolle bei der Verteidigung und Sicherung der Ostgrenzen spielten. Diese miteinander verflochtenen Migrationsbewegungen werden auf der Grundlage von historiographischen und archäologischen Quellen analysiert. Die sich aus der Untersuchung dieser Daten ergebende Heterogenität und Komplexität dieser vor-modernen Migrationsprozesse mahnt auch zur Vorsicht gegenüber vereinfachenden und vereinheitlichenden Wanderungsmodellen.

Summary

The incorporation of the south Caucasian kingdoms of Armenia, Iberia (eastern Georgia), and Caucasian Albania into the Arab Caliphate in the 7th century AD commenced a gradually accelerating process of immigration of Muslim elites (of Arab, Persian, Kurdish, and, later, Turkish-Central Asian origin), together with their retinues, into this region, which began to lead to the creation of new centres of Islamic power alongside the principalities of the local aristocracy in the late 8th century and the 9th century AD. The south Caucasian aristocracy, meanwhile, maintained traditions of aristocratic mobility, being active most notably in the Byzantine Empire, where Armenian warriors and settlers played an important role in defending and securing the Empire's eastern borders. These intertwined migratory movements are analysed on the basis of historiographic and archaeological sources. The heterogeneity and complexity of these pre-modern migration processes, as they emerge from a survey of the evidence, also sound a note of caution against simplistic and homogenising migration models.

The kingdoms of the south Caucasus between empires

The late antique kingdoms of the south Caucasus – Lazika in modern-day western Georgia, Iberia in eastern Georgia, Caucasian Albania in modern-day Azerbaijan, and Greater Armenia (*Armenia maior* in contrast to *Armenia minor* to the west of the Euphrates River), covering large parts of modern-day eastern Turkey and today's Republic of Armenia – were located at the peripheries of the neighbouring great powers, the Roman (or »Byzantine«) Empire and Sasanian Persia, but in the centre of their competing imperial claims (Fig. 1). In contrast to other frontier areas, these regions had an indigenous historiography which had been emerging since the 5th century AD (especially in the case of Armenia), and which provides us with a valuable perspective on the polities of these empires as seen by their »objects« or even »victims« (Preiser-Kapeller 2009; Preiser-Kapeller 2015).

The highlands of the south Caucasus are characterised by a landscape fragmented by various mountain ranges, where larger alluvial plains around rivers and lakes are of central economic importance but are also often subject to a delicate

ecological balance of temperature, precipitation, and evaporation (Preiser-Kapeller forthcoming a). In Late Antiquity, these topographical parameters also fostered a fragmentation of political power among a number of aristocratic houses competing for power and prestige. Their authority could also be enhanced by ties of patronage to a superior, exterior imperial power (Adontz 1970; Garsoïan 1997). It was this internal fragmentation of power, in particular, which allowed Rome/Byzantium, Persia and, later, the caliphate to exert their influence within the region and even to divide it into spheres of interest. Yet competition among the noble families and fragmentation of political power restricted not only the chances of collective action on the part of the aristocracy, but also the stability of foreign domination; like the indigenous kings, the representatives installed by the imperial overlords were unable to enforce universal allegiance to the suzerain and had to find compromises with the indigenous nobility. The structure of the aristocratic societies, equally, allowed for a certain degree of flexibility in relations with the great powers, an adaptation to separation between various spheres of interest and the existence of multiple layers of authority and loyalty¹. Members of

¹ Garsoïan 1971; Greenwood 2008; Preiser-Kapeller 2008; Thomson 2008.

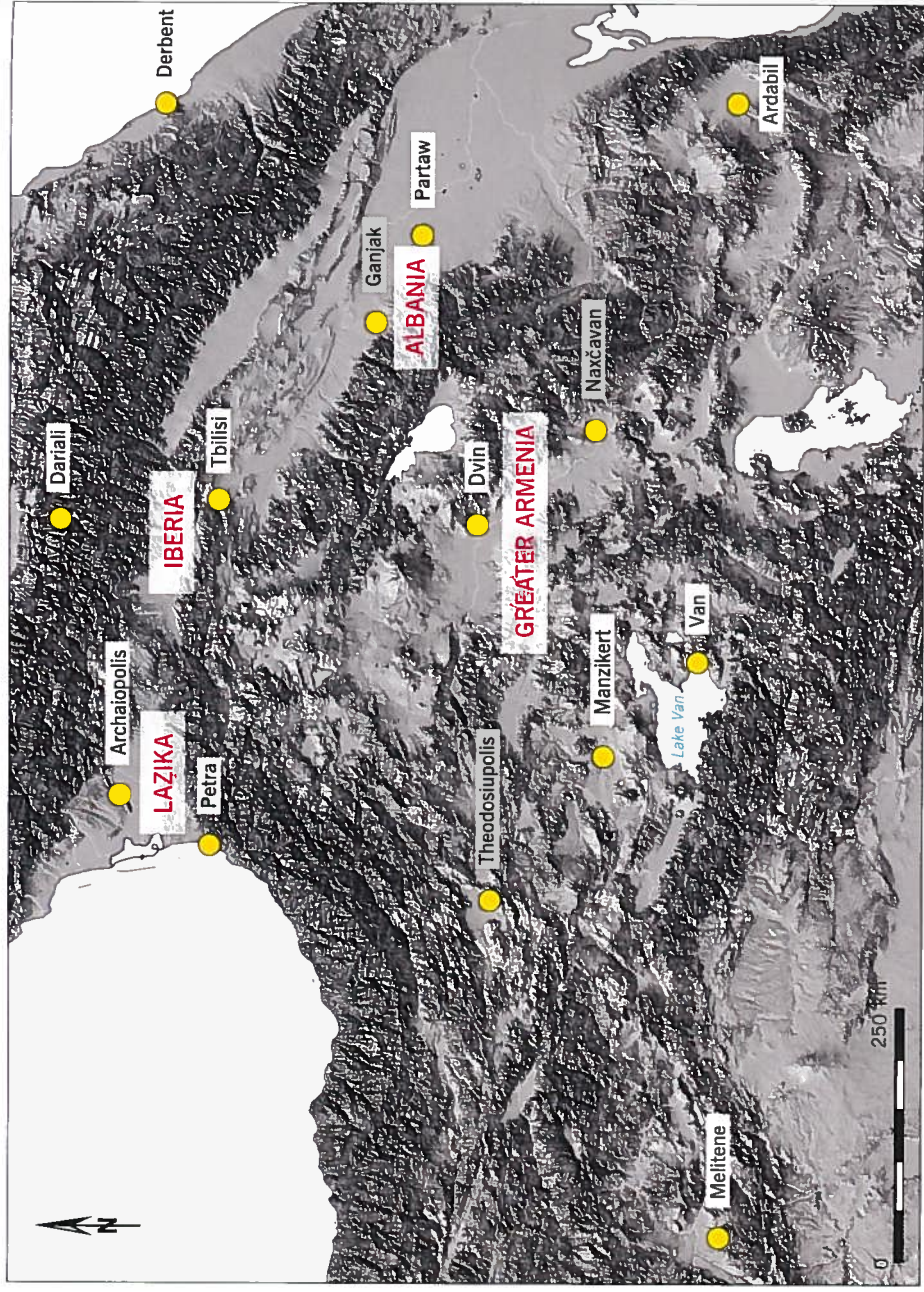


Fig. 1 Map showing the kingdoms of the south Caucasus (Lazika, Iberia, Caucasian Albania, and Greater Armenia) and selected important places in Late Antiquity (4th-6th century AD).

Abb. 1 Karte der Königreiche des Südkaukasus (Lazika, Iberien, Kaukasisch Albanien und Großarmenien) und ausgewählter wichtiger Orte in der Spätantike (4. - 6. Jh. n. Chr.).

the same noble clan could serve different empires, on either side of the frontier. Forming »trans-local families« was one way in which noble houses could maintain power in the face of changing political conditions (Harzig/Hoerder 2009; Preisser-Kapeller 2017). Aristocratic mobility with respect to the neighbouring imperial spheres became an essential element of the strategies of both individuals and aristocratic houses (Greenwood 2002).

Migrations from the Caucasus into the Roman/Byzantine and Sasanian Persian Empires

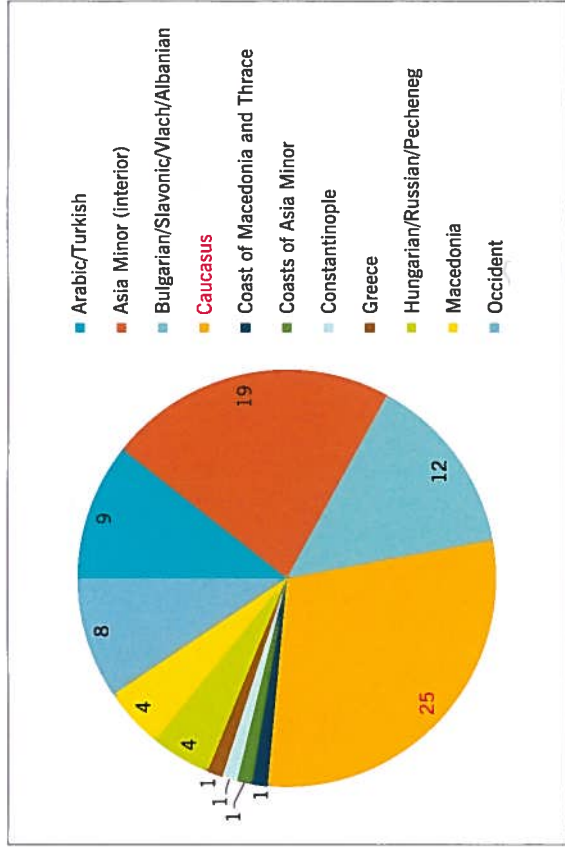
For the competing empires this mobility on the part of the indigenous aristocracy provided ample opportunity either to attract new clients locally, and thus to expand their sphere of influence in strategically important frontier areas, or to integrate valuable new followers into the imperial service, thus weakening the opponent. Yet, under changing circumstances, these aristocrats were also willing to cross borders several times (Preisser-Kapeller 2010). Nevertheless, Byzantium relied on a constant flow of military expertise and manpower from these regions (Charanis 1961; Settapani 2006; Brubaker/Haldon 2011, 159–192), as can be seen from a successful campaign of the armies of Anatolia in AD 778,

for instance: three of the five most important army groups (among them the *thema* of Armeniakon) were commanded by Artabasdos (*Artawazd* from the powerful house of Mamikonian, who left Armenia after a rebellion in AD 771), Gregorios tu Musulakiu (also a Mamikonian, son of Mušet) and Tatzates (*Tačat Anjevac'i*, who had defected to Byzantium around AD 750). In AD 782 after negotiations with the Arabs, the latter returned to Armenia, where he became »presiding prince« of the country in the service of the caliph (and died in AD 785 in battle against the Khazars) – another example of aristocratic flexibility with regard to changing imperial patrons (PmbZ no. 640; 2407; 7241; Trittle 1977).

Scholarship has emphasised the significance of these mobile aristocrats (and their retainers) for the formation of elites in the Byzantine Empire, where in the 11th/12th century AD up to 30 % of the families of the military elite traced their origins back to the south Caucasus (Fig. 2; Kazhdan/Ronchey 1999, 333–338); sometimes this significance was even over-emphasised, for instance when P. Charanis (1961) wrote about a »Greco-Armenian Empire«. One might ask to what extent such families could still be considered »Armenian« several generations after their migration to Byzantium. To successfully join the Byzantine elite, one had to adopt both its linguistic (Greek) and religious preferences; for Armenian noblemen this included conversion to the Byz-

Fig. 2 Ethno-geographic origins of 85 families of the military elite of the Byzantine Empire, 11th–12th century AD.

Abb. 2 Ethnische und geographische Herkunft von 85 Familien der Militäraristokratie des Byzantinischen Reiches, 11.–12. Jh. n. Chr.



antine Orthodox Church, which had been in schism with the Armenian Church since the early 7th century AD (Garsoïan 1999). After such processes of assimilation, individuals of Armenian origin even rose to the imperial throne in Constantinople, for example Emperor Leon V (reign AD 813–820). His oldest son, bearing the Armenian name »Smbat«, was renamed »Constantine« on the occasion of his crowning as co-emperor. This indicates Leon's efforts to »fit in« by abandoning too obvious signs of »Armenian« identity; however, his initiative to re-vitalise Iconoclasm (directed against the veneration of holy images in the church) earned him enduring bad press in Byzantine historiography, including the bynames of »the Armenian« and »the Amalekite« (one of the hostile neighbouring people of the Israelites mentioned in the Old Testament), which targeted his »non-Roman« background (PmbZ no. 4244; Turner 1990). Integration into Byzantine society may have seemed easier for individuals of Georgian background, since their church remained in ecclesiastical communion with the Byzantine one. In their case too, however, there were difficulties; we learn, for instance, that the use by Georgian monks of a language other than Greek in the liturgy in 9th century AD Bithynia aroused the suspicion of the Byzantines (Tchikoidze 2011, 217). Byzantium was a multi-ethnic empire of various languages and religions, but with a clear premium for those who adopted the use of the Greek language, Orthodox Christianity, and the »Roman« cultural heritage (Garsoïan 1998).

Despite the religious difference between the Christian nobilities of the south Caucasus and the official Zoroastrian cult of the Iranian elites, similar career opportunities existed for aristocrats in the service of the Sasanian Great King; after his defection from Byzantium, the Armenian nobleman Smbat Bagratuni, for instance, achieved a most honoured position at the court of the Sasanian Great King Xusrō II (reign AD 590–628), who even awarded him the title *Xosrov Šurn* (»Xusrō's joy«). Smbat relied on already existing networks of Armenian noblemen and their retainers in the service of the Sasanians and with the help of these troops distinguished himself as a general, especially against the enemies of the Great King in Central Asia (Preisser-Kapeller 2010; Preisser-

Kapeller 2015). During these campaigns, he encountered descendants of Armenians deported by the Persians (along with people from the Roman Empire, especially the Syrian provinces) some decades earlier; the episode is an interesting example of the gradual loss and »re-vitalisation« of linguistic and religious elements of Armenian identity in the »diaspora«. We learn that these deportees »had forgotten their own language, lost the use of writing, and lacked the priestly order.« But Smbat Bagratuni took care that »they were confirmed in the faith and learned to write and speak their language« again, amongst other things by appointing an Armenian priest for them (Sebeōs 97; transl. Thomson 1999, 44). The Armenian community was localised in the frontier region between Iran and Central Asia, to the east of the Caspian Sea, where the Sasanian Great Kings had maintained a 200 km long line of fortifications and military settlements (the »Great Wall of Gorgan«) in a most impressive way since the 5th century AD, as recent archaeological excavations have illustrated. Manpower both for the garrisons and the agricultural cultivation of the surrounding areas was mobilised from various parts of the Persian Empire (Sauer et al. 2013; Alizadeh 2014). Similar measures were also undertaken for the protection of the frontiers in the south Caucasus (see below).

Mobility of elites and migrations into the south Caucasus before the Arab conquest

While the mobility of individuals and groups from the south Caucasus has been discussed in many studies, including studies of the »pre-history« of the well-known modern Armenian diaspora, scholarship has for some reason paid less attention to the phenomenon of the migration of external elites and populations into the south Caucasian regions, especially during the Early Islamic Empire, in the period between AD 700 and 900 on which the present paper focuses (cf. especially Ter-Ghewondyan 1976). Even before that period, the neighbouring great powers, which attracted migration from Armenia, Georgia, and Caucasian Albania, also motivated the movement of people into these areas.



Fig. 3 Map of Derbent on the Caspian Sea (in Arabic *Bāb al-Abwāb*, lit. »Gate of Gates«), a major route across the Caucasus and a focal point of military settlement in the Sasanian and early Arabic period (5th–10th century AD).

Abb. 3 Karte von Derbent am Kaspischen Meer (arab. *Bāb al-Abwāb*, »Tor der Tore«), ein Hauptübergang zwischen dem Norden und dem Süden des Kaukasus und ein Schwerpunkt militärischer Ansiedlung in der sasanidischen und frühislamischen Zeit (5.–10. Jh. n. Chr.).



Fig. 4 View of the Citadel of Derbent on the Caspian Sea, originally erected during the Sasanian period in the 5th century AD.

Abb. 4 Blick auf die Zitadelle von Derbent am Kaspischen Meer, ursprünglich im 5. Jh. n. Chr. in sasanidischer Zeit errichtet.

The cities on the Black Sea coast of historical western Georgia, some of them ancient Greek colonies, formed an important transition zone between the wider Mediterranean world and the Caucasus. For a time, Roman imperial troops (of various origins) were also garrisoned in these cities; in the 6th century AD, facing renewed intensive conflict with Persia in the south Caucasus, Emperor Justinian I (reign AD 527–565) intensified this presence and erected a new fortified city with a Roman garrison in Petra (today Cixisdziri) on the Black Sea littoral (see Fig. 1; Seibt 1992; Braund 1994, 238–314; Everill 2014). Equally, the expansion of Roman control into western Armenia after the division of *Armenia maior* between Rome and Persia in AD 387 brought about the movement of Roman officials and soldiers of various ethnic backgrounds into these regions (sometimes accompanied by their families), as in the case of the important city of Theodosiopolis (today Erzurum; see Fig. 1), founded under Emperor Theodosius II (reign AD 408–450) (Blockley 1987). These fortresses also had the purpose of controlling the mobility of the Armenian population across the newly established Roman-Persian border, as

described by the Byzantine historian Procopius for the time of Justinian I. Later Byzantine legislation also tried to impede the free movement of Armenian groups once they had settled under imperial authority (Procopius, *De Aedificiis* III, 3,3,9–12; Dignas/Winter 2007, 208; Preiser-Kapeller 2017).

Between the late 4th century and the late 6th century AD, the Sasanian Persian Empire claimed suzerainty over the lion's share of south Caucasus almost unchallenged, including most of *Armenia maior* and all of Caucasian Albania and eastern Georgia (Iberia). In order to secure their imperial claims, the Great Kings also transferred troops and settlers into these regions. Focal points of these measures were the strategic strongholds on the main routes across the Caucasus, such as Derbent (today, Republic of Dagestan, Russia) on the Caspian Sea (in Arabic *Bāb al-Abwāb*, lit. »Gate of Gates«; Fig. 1; 3–4) and Dariali (from Persian *Dar-e Alān*, meaning »Gate of the Alans«, the Alans being a people settled to the north of this route) in the central Caucasus to the north of Tbilisi (Fig. 1; 5–6); they served to defend against nomadic raids from the steppes to the north. While later his-

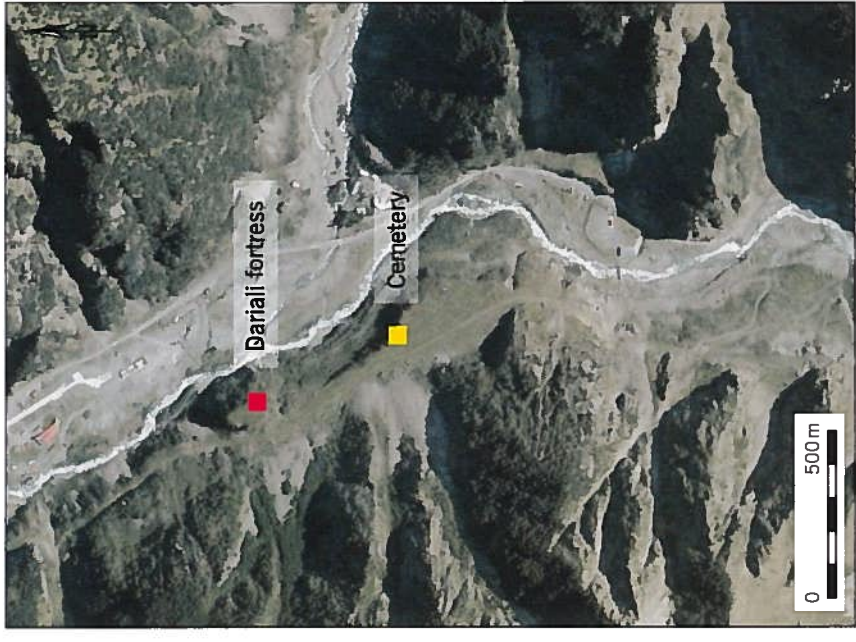


Fig. 5 Map of the Dariali route (from the Persian *Dar-e Alān*, meaning »Gate of the Alans«) in the central Caucasus to the north of Tbilisi, with the fortress and a recently excavated burial ground to the south of it. Dariali was another important military settlement in the Sasanian and early Arabic period (5th–10th century AD).

Abb. 5 Karte des Dariali-Übergangs im Zentralkaukasus nördlich von Tbilisi (der Name kommt vom persischen *Dar-e Alān*, »Tor der Alanen«), einer weiteren wichtigen militärischen Siedlung in der sasanidischen und früharabischen Zeit (5.–10. Jh. n. Chr.), mit der Festung und einem kürzlich entdeckten Gräberfeld südlich davon.

torians of the early Islamic period attributed the fortification and settlement of these places primarily to the Sasanian rulers of the 6th century AD, archaeological excavations have traced back the origin of these measures to the early 5th century AD (as in the case of the above-mentioned wall of Gorgān) and recently also identified further lines of defence and settlement projects emerging in that period to the south, in modern-day Azerbaijan and north-west Iran (Kramers 1936; Alizadeh 2014; Sauer et al. 2015). Further destinations of these movements of people in the service of the Great

Kings were the main cities of Armenia, Georgia, and Caucasian Albania, for instance administrative centres such as the Armenian capital of Dvin, prov. Ayrarat, where after the deposition of the last Armenian king of the Arsacid dynasty in AD 428 a Persian governor (*marzban*) took up residence, together with his retinue (Fig. 1; 7). In addition, Dvin served as a hub of interregional commerce and attracted traders (and migrants) from all over the Sasanian realm and beyond (Procopius, *Bella* II 2,25, 1–3; Manandian 1965; Garsoïan 2012, 31–33). Accordingly, we learn that on the occasion of the



Fig. 6 View of the fortress of Dariali in the central Caucasus, whose origins can be traced back to the Sasanian period in the 5th century AD.

Abb. 6 Blick auf die Festung von Dariali im Zentralkaukasus, deren Ursprünge auf das 5. Jh. n. Chr. in sasanidischer Zeit zurückgeführt werden können.



Fig. 7 View of the remains of the ancient Armenian capital of Dvin (today Republic of Armenia), a centre of Persian and Arab imperial administration, settlement, and commerce in the 5th–10th century AD.

Abb. 7 Blick auf die Reste der alten armenischen Hauptstadt Dvin (heute in der Republik Armenien), einem Verwaltungs- und Stützpunktzentrum des persischen und arabischen Reiches sowie des Handels im 5.–10. Jh. n. Chr.

first Arab attack on the city in AD 640 the population of Dvin consisted of Christians (mostly Armenians), Jews (whose communities had been present in the country since the 1st century BC) and »Magians«, i.e. followers of the official Zoroastrian religion of Sasanian Persia (al-Baladhuri, Kitāb al Futūḥ 314–315). The Arab historian al-Baladhuri also tells us that Great King Xusrō I (reign AD 531–579) not only brought soldiers and settlers from the core areas of Persia into the south Caucasus, but also Sogdians from Central Asia (see below), with whom he populated the fortified city of Sughdabil in eastern Georgia, near Tbilisi (al-Baladhuri, Kitāb al Futūḥ 306; Kramers 1936). In various regards, the caliphs of the early Islamic Empire would follow the examples of their Sasanian predecessors.

The Arab conquest and the reaction of the local elites

The Arab-Islamic expansion between AD 630 and 660 dramatically changed the geopolitical environment of the countries of the south Caucasus with the conquest of the entire Sasanian Persian Empire and the »roll-back« of the Byzantines from Egypt and Syria into Asia Minor (Hoyland 2015; Berger 2016). The Arabs were also prepared to acknowledge the »special« conditions in the Caucasian highlands when

they entered the scene from the 640s onwards and allowed the indigenous aristocracy a high degree of autonomy, which initially also included the absence of Arab troops in the area. In order to secure the Armenian loyalty, however, Muʿāwīya, then still governor of Syria, demanded the dispatch of more than 1000 hostages to Damascus. Nevertheless, a majority of the aristocracy defected to the Byzantine emperor in AD 656, when the caliphate was weakened due to the »First Fitna«, the civil war between Muʿāwīya and Ali. Only after the restoration of Arab power with Muʿāwīya's victory in AD 661 did the Armenian nobility acknowledge the caliph's suzerainty again (Sebeos 175; transl. Thomson 1999, 153; Dölger 2009, no. 228a). This pattern repeated itself during subsequent periods of internal turmoil in the caliphate, until a stricter regime (including regular taxation and Arab garrisons) was established during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (reign AD 685–705, Fig. 8) after a more permanent expulsion of Byzantine forces (Seibt 1996; Garsoïan 1997a). This reorganisation was preceded by another violent uprising of the Armenian aristocracy, whose suppression was described as extremely cruel even in Arabic sources. Furthermore, in the following decades, despite the Arab administration, the south Caucasus became the regular target of raids (Arabic *ġazwa*), similar to those in other border regions of the Islamic world such

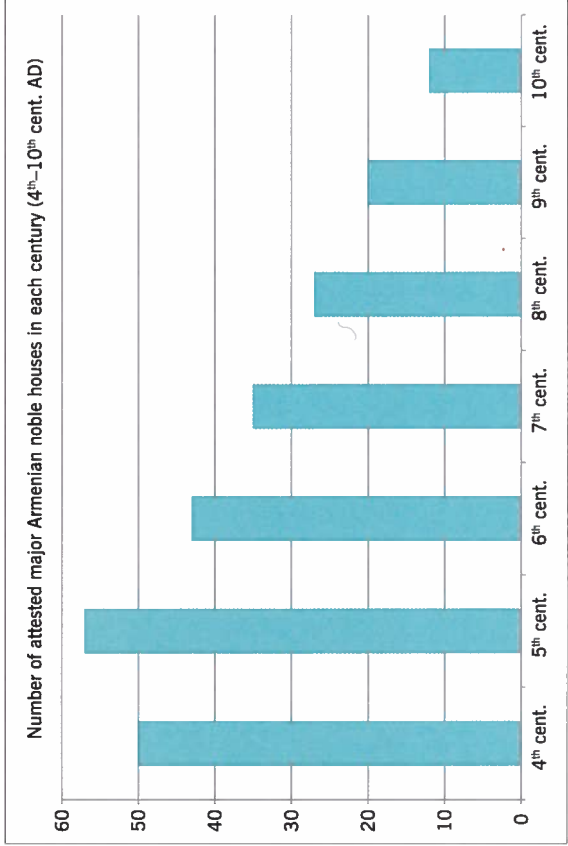
Fig. 8 Gold coin of the Umayyad Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (reign AD 685–705), who established a strong Arab regime in al-Arminiya at the turn of the 8th century AD; at this point in his reign, his coinage, like his predecessors', still followed earlier Byzantine and Persian models, but he later introduced a new coinage without images.

Abb. 8 Goldmünze des Umayyadenkalifen ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (reg. 685–705 n. Chr.), der am Übergang vom 7. zum 8. Jh. n. Chr. ein striktes arabisches Regime in al-Arminiya durchsetzte; während die Münzen des Kalifats bis zu seiner Regierungszeit früheren byzantinischen und persischen Vorbildern folgten, führte er später Münzen ohne Bilder ein.



Fig. 9 The number of major houses of the Armenian nobility attested in the sources, 4th–10th century AD.

Abb. 9 Die Zahl der in Quellen belegten bedeutenden Häuser des armenischen Adels, 4.–10. Jh. n. Chr.



as Byzantine Anatolia (Khalifa ibn Khayyat 157; 207). Parts of the aristocracy reacted to the new regime and, in particular, to the reimposition of taxation with recurring rebellions. Other aristocratic families sought co-operation with the new rulers, and local historiography complains of the ongoing competition between the aristocratic houses, which prevented the establishment of a united front against the Arabs (Tʿovma Arctuni III, 1). In order to secure the loyalty of the nobility and to restore tranquility, the Umayyad authorities also resorted to the deportation of hostages or individual rebellious aristocrats to the capital, Damascus, or other distant regions of the caliphate, such as Yemen (mentioned in the following Armenian sources: Sebeos, Patmutʿiwn Sebeosi 175; Yovhannes Drasyanakertʿi c. 20; Lewond 108). Other nobles tried to escape from the Arabs' grasp into the Byzantine Empire, especially after failed uprisings; sometimes they were accompanied by a large number of people, for instance in AD 788, when allegedly 12000 men, women, and children migrated

across the frontier into Byzantine Asia Minor (Lewond 216). The Byzantine emperors (as in earlier periods) resettled such groups both in the border provinces next to the Arab Empire, but also in more distant areas, such as the Balkans and Italy (Ditten 1993; Asa Eger 2015; Preiser-Kapeller 2017). Particularly in the 8th century AD, as a result of these wars, abductions, and escapes, we observe a significant decline in the number of aristocratic families whose representatives either died in the struggle against the Arabs or left their homelands (Fig. 9). This general demographic and economic decline in various areas, as described in the literary sources, can also be measured quantitatively for the region around Lake Van in historical south Armenia (see Fig. 1) by a systematic recording of the datable building activity, as well as by the evaluation of the environmental data from drill cores from the sediments from Lake Van (Fig. 10; Preiser-Kapeller forthcoming a). Muslim leaders and their followers now moved into the resulting political power vacuums².

2 We can observe a similar phenomenon in western Georgia, where the Arab invasions from the early 8th century AD onwards lead to the collapse of the kingdom of Lazika, whose capital of Archaiopolis (Nokalakevi) was deserted (as archaeological evidence also

demonstrates) and parts of whose elite and population migrated to Byzantine territory in the hinterland of Trebizond (where a new »Lazika« emerged); in this case the main beneficiaries were not Muslim groups, but the neighbouring princes of Abkhazia who

acquired the former core areas of Lazika and emerged as a new predominant power in western Georgia from the late 8th century AD onwards (Seibt 1992; Everill 2014, 9–11).

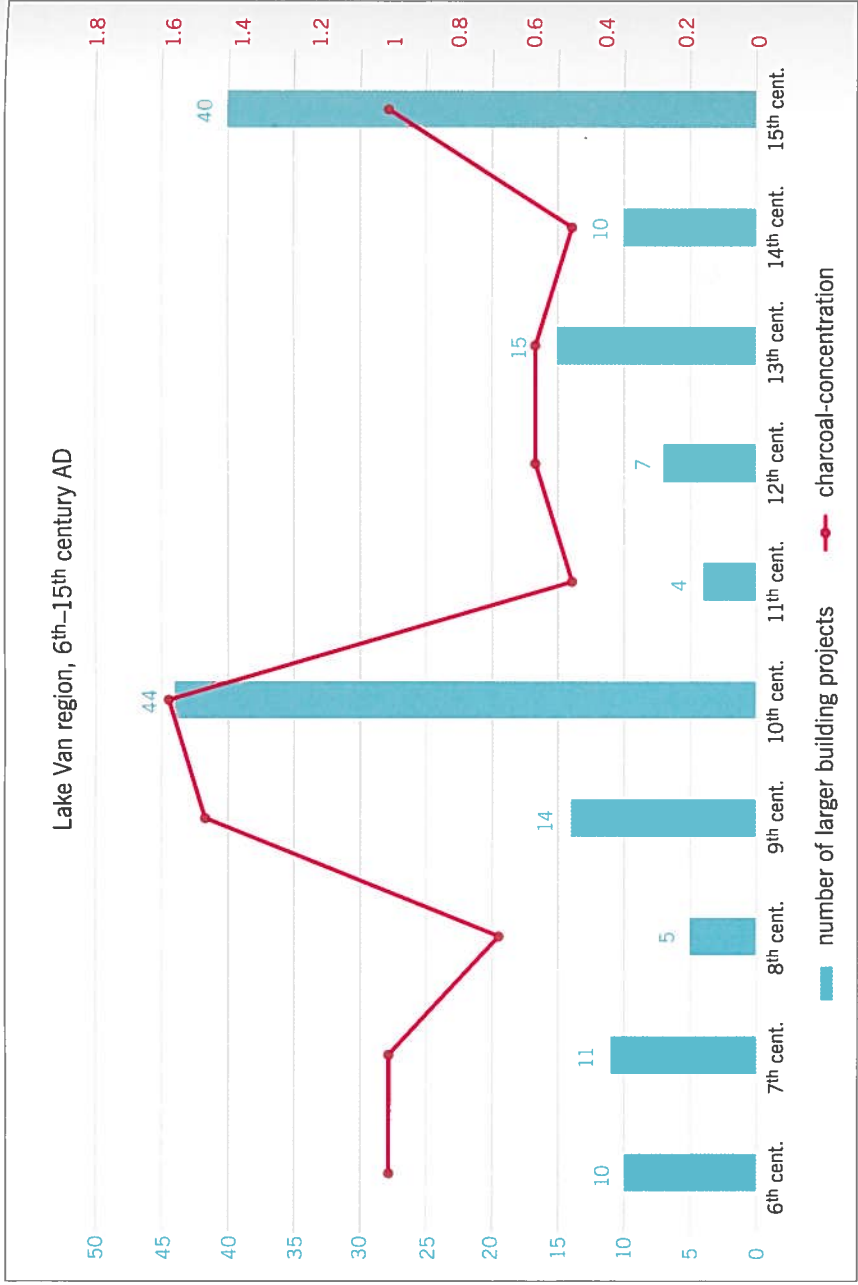


Fig. 10 Number of larger building projects in the Lake Van region (historical south Armenia) and charcoal index from core samples taken from the sediments in Lake Van (Turkey) as proxies for human activity, 6th–15th century AD; the demographic decline of the 8th century AD is clearly visible.

Abb. 10 Zahl der großen Bauprojekte in der Vansee-Region (historisches Südarmenien) und Holzkohle-Index aus Bohrkernen von Sedimenten des Vansees (Türkei) als Indikatoren für menschliche Aktivität, 6.–15. Jh. n. Chr.; der demographische Rückgang des 8. Jhs. n. Chr. ist deutlich sichtbar.

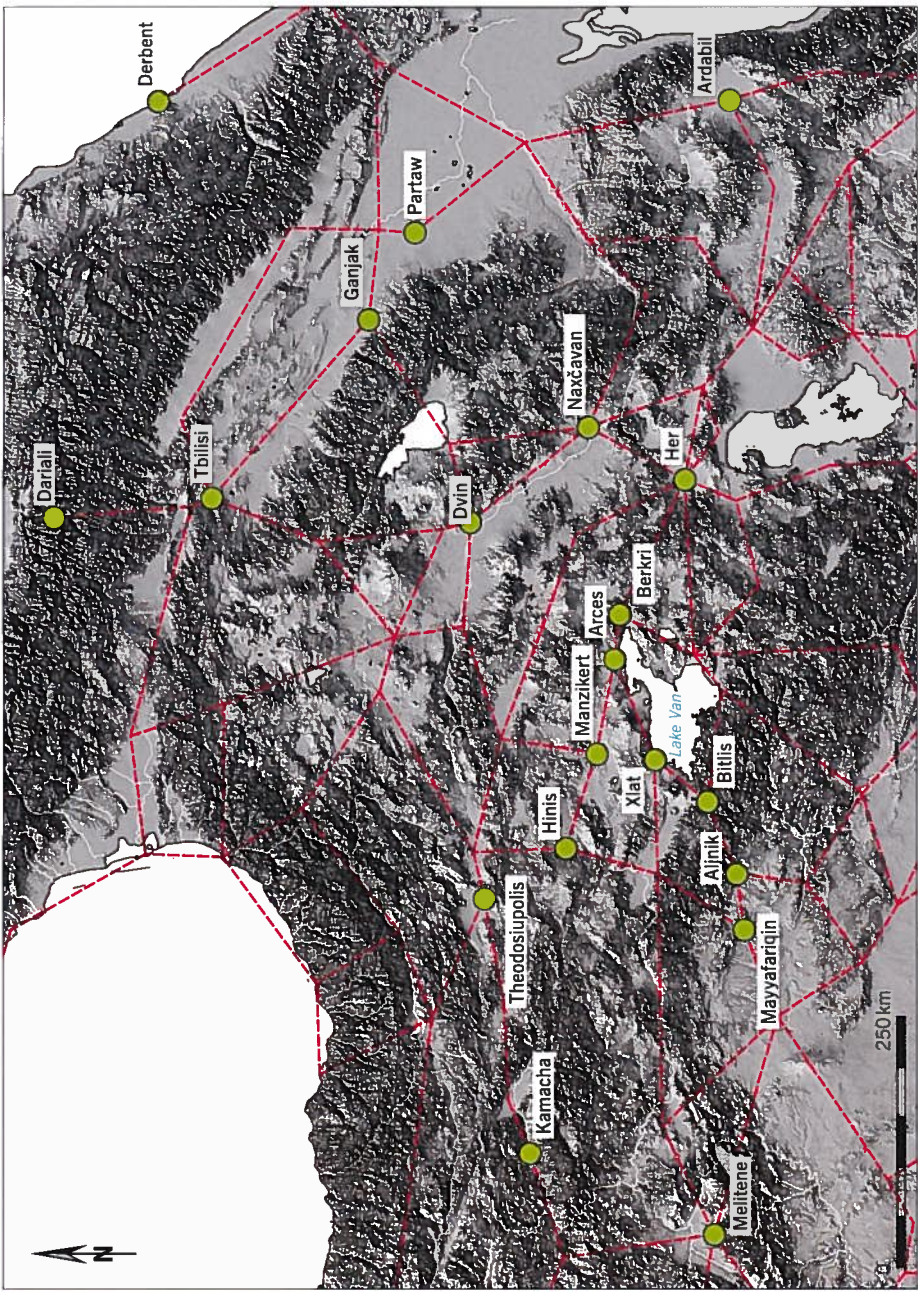
The migration of Arab groups into the south Caucasus in the 8th century AD

The above-mentioned reorganisation of Arab rule in the south Caucasus by Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān included the deployment of Arab troops to important fortresses on the frontier facing Byzantium and on the routes across the Caucasus, as well as in the urban centres of Armenia (Dvin, Naxčavan), eastern Georgia (Tbilisi), and Caucasian Albania (Partaw), thus following the spatial patterns of earlier Sasanian Persian domination (Fig. 11). All these areas were combined into the major province of ‘al-Armīniya’, whose governor (like the Persian *marzban* before him) resided in the Armenian capital of Dvin. Office bearers, together with their retainers, now also constituted permanent settlements (K’art’lis C’xovreba 324–325; Garsoian 1997a). As in other provinces of the caliphate, these military settlers received both regular payments from tax revenues and other sources of income from the immediate environment of their garrisons, such as landed property; this we learn to have been the case, for instance, in Derbent (*Bāb al-Abwāb*; see Fig. 3–4) on the Caspian Sea, where Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik (*fluorit* AD 705–738), a general and son of Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, reportedly settled 24 000 Arabs from Syria in order to secure this route against incursions from the steppe empire of the Khazars to the north of the Caucasus (al-Baladhuri Kitāb al Futūḥ 325; Daniel 2012; al-Sharkawi 2013).

Around the same time, according to al-Baladhuri, an Arab garrison was also established in Dar-e Alān in the central Caucasus to the north of Tbilisi; this was confirmed recently by archaeological excavations, where burials document the continuity of this settlement from the early 8th to the 10th century AD (see Fig. 5–6; al-Baladhuri, Kitāb al Futūḥ 328 f.; Sauer et al. 2015).

Al-Baladhuri gives a further insight into the early settlement of Arab groups in the garrison towns of Melitene (Malatya) and Theodosiopolis (Erzurum), on the border with Byzantium, (see Fig. 11) when he describes the devastation of these places in the 750s by the troops of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine V (reign AD 741–775), who took advantage of the revolt of the Abbasids against the Umayyad caliphs at that time. We learn that besides the Arabs, Armenians still lived in Theodosiopolis and supported the Byzantines during the conquest, and that later the second Abbasid caliph al-Mansūr (reign AD 754–775) ransomed the surviving prisoners and rebuilt the city with them as well as with settlers from Mesopotamia and other places (al-Baladhuri, Kitāb al Futūḥ 312 f.).

In general, with the Abbasid period the amount of information on Arab and Muslim migration to the south Caucasus increases; from the beginning it is clear that the new arrivals were not a homogeneous community, but consisted of different groups, usually linked through tribal loyalties but also competing with each other and by no means always acting according to central planning. E. Orthmann, in her monograph of 2002, has relativised the basic division



between south Arabian tribes (Yaman) and north Arabian groups (Qais), which has been also observed for other regions (Orthmann 2002, especially 278 f.; cf. also Crone 1980; Franz 2007); but our sources describe at least the smaller-sized tribal classifications as relevant for the dynamics of Arab immigration (cf. also Daniel 2012; Berger 2016, 245–251). Particularly significant in this regard is the narrative of al-Ya‘qūbī for the time of the famous caliph, Hārūn ar-Rašid (reign AD 786–809): ‘Harun ar-Rašid appointed Yusuf b. Rashid al-Sulami as governor of Armīniya [in AD 786/787] [...]. He transplanted a mass of Nizari to this land, and [until then] the Yemenites had formed a majority in Armīniya, but in the days of Yusuf, the Nizari increased in number [...]. Then Harun ar-Rašid named Yazid ibn Mazyad ibn Za‘ida al-Shaybani [in AD 787/788], and he brought from every side so many of the Rab‘ia that they now form a majority, and he controlled the land so strictly that no one dared to move in it. After him came Abd al-Kabir ibn Abd al-Hamid [in AD 788] [...] whose home was Harran. He came with a multitude of men from Diyar Mudar, stayed only four months and left.’ (al-Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīḥ II 515 [transl. Ter-Ghewondyan 1976, 31]). We learn that originally members of south Arab tribes (Yaman) represented the majority of Arabs in *al-Armīniya*. This is also confirmed by the names of several of the first governors of the country documented

in the Umayyad period, which refer to Yaman tribal groups (Laurent 1980). Under the Abbasids, these conditions of power apparently changed in favour of such north Arab tribal groups as the Qais, whom we have already encountered previously in northern Mesopotamia, especially the Nizari, with their subgroups of the Mudar, Rab‘ia, and Bakr (Fig. 12; Ter-Ghewondyan 1976, 31–33; Orthmann 2002, 106–119). But even these groups, which were related to each other, at least in the tribal tradition, competed for land and power in *Armīniya*; the Rab‘ia around Yazid al-Shaybānī, whose descendants we later find as emirs in the region, had such success that the migration project of the Mudar from Harrān (today in south-east Turkey) failed. Similar strife between tribal groups or between early arrivals and latecomers can be observed for other regions of Arab settlement throughout the caliphate (Minorsky 1953; Ter-Ghewondyan 1976, 31–33; Daniel 2012).

Divisions and conflicts among the Islamic migration communities

The leaders of these groups from northern Mesopotamia, however, saw themselves not only confronted by Arab competitors, but also by Iranian elites and groups who had fol-

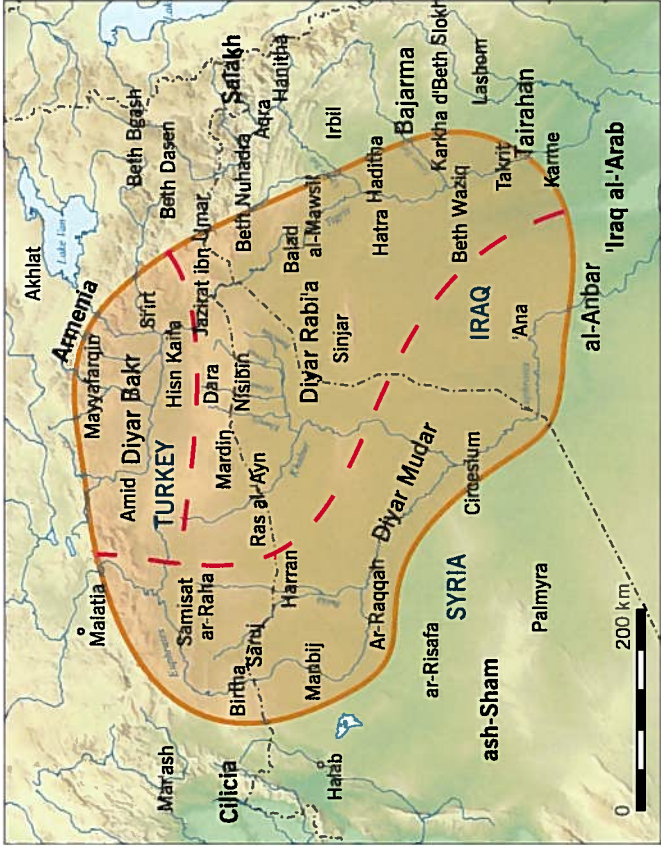


Fig. 12 Map of the main settlement areas of Arab tribal groups in northern Mesopotamia (arabic Ġazīra) in the 7th–10th century AD; from the later 8th century AD onwards, these groups also migrated into al-Arminiya.

Abb. 12 Karte der Hauptsiedlungsgebiete arabischer Stammesgruppen in Nordmesopotamien (arabisch Ġazīra) im 7.–10. Jh. n. Chr.; ab dem späteren 8. Jh. n. Chr. migrierten diese Gruppen auch nach al-Arminiya.

lowed the first Abbasids from the east of the caliphate, i.e. the frontier areas between Iran and Central Asia. These areas included Khurāsān, the region between the city of Nišāpūr and the Oxus River (*Amu Darya*), and the areas beyond that river, Transoxania or, in Arabic, *Mā warāʾu n-nahr*, which included the country of Sogdia, between the Oxus and the Jaxartes River (*Syr Darya*), centred on the valley of the Zar-afśān River with the renowned cities of Samarkand and Buhārā (Fig. 13). These regions had similarities with the south Caucasian frontier lands: they were characterised by political fragmentation between different princedoms and rival nobilities and lay at the intersection of competing imperial spheres: Sasanian Persia and then the caliphate to the south, the Turkish Khanate of the Central Asian steppes to the north and imperial China to the east. Frequently Arab rule (which in Sogdia, as in Armenia, began in earnest from the early 8th century AD onwards) was challenged by rebellions. After the Abbasids had overthrown the Umayyad Caliphate in AD 750, their military retinue (especially the so-called *Khurāsānīs*), partly mobilised from the regional, non-Arab elites in that area, was deployed both on the frontier facing Byzantium and against insurgents in Armenia; they also received special quarters in the newly founded capital of Baghdad after AD 762/763 (de la Vaissière 2007; Kārev 2015; Preiser-Kapeller forthcoming). As the Armenian historian Lewond (158–160) informs us, a numerous group of *Khurāsānīs* accompanied the new governor al-Ḥasan ibn Qaṭṭaba in AD 770/771 into *Arminiya*; Lewond describes their regime as especially oppressive, leading to another rebellion of parts of the Armenian nobility. After the failure of this uprising, further *Khurāsānīs* came with Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Ḥarāṣī, a client of Caliph Ḥārūn ar-Rašīd, to the south Caucasus. This group, together with earlier arrivals from their ranks, in AD 795 rose in arms against an Arab governor from northern Mesopotamia, Aḥmad as-Sulamī, presumably in another conflict over access to revenues and resources (al-Yāʿqūbī, Taʾrīḥ II 377; [transl. Orthmann 2002, 296]).

In addition to these »tribal« rivalries and ethnic conflicts (both called in Arab sources of that time *ʿaṣabiya*), we also observe religious tensions within Muslim migrant communities in the south Caucasus. For the year AD 815 al-Yāʿqūbī reports bloody conflicts between followers of the *Muʿtazila*, a philosophically influenced branch of Islam, which at the time enjoyed the support of the Abbasid caliphs, and representatives of the Sunni orthodoxy, who rejected the religious policy of the imperial centre (al-Yāʿqūbī, Taʾrīḥ II 419; [transl. Orthmann 2002, 299]). An even more dangerous challenge to the caliphate in the region was the insurrection of the Khurramites (from Persian *ḫurrām-dīnān*, the »followers of the joyful religion«), who, as P. Crone (2012) has recently analysed in detail, combined elements of the ancient Persian religion of Zoroastrianism with resistance to Arab rule over the Iranian countries. Under the leadership of Babak, in his inaccessible fortress, *al-Badd*, they gained control over vast parts of Azerbaijan between AD 816 and 838, also making use of internal power struggles within the Abbasid dynasty. Babak also allied with the neighbouring Armenian Prince Vasak of Siwnikʿ, whose daughter he even married. Several times, the caliphs mobilised troops against Babak, but in vain, as for instance in the year AD 827; on this occasion we learn that these campaigns not only brought more Arabs from the ranks of the Yaman, Rabīʿa, and Mudar of northern Mesopotamia (the *Ġazīra*) to the south Caucasus, but also Muslims from Ġibāl (central western Iran), Baṣra (Iraq), Ḥiğāz, Oman and al-Baḥrayn on the Arab peninsula as well as from Fārs and Ahwāz in south-west Iran (see Fig. 13; Orthmann 2002, 186).

Success against the *Khurramites*ʿ rebellion was only brought about by representatives of a new group of Central Asian retainers who, from AD 819 onwards, found their way to the central lands of the caliphate with the Caliphs al-Maʾmūn (reign AD 813–833) and his brother al-Muʿtaṣim (reign AD 833–842). Among them were Ḥaydar ibn Kāwūs Afshin and his followers, who had only recently converted to Islam,

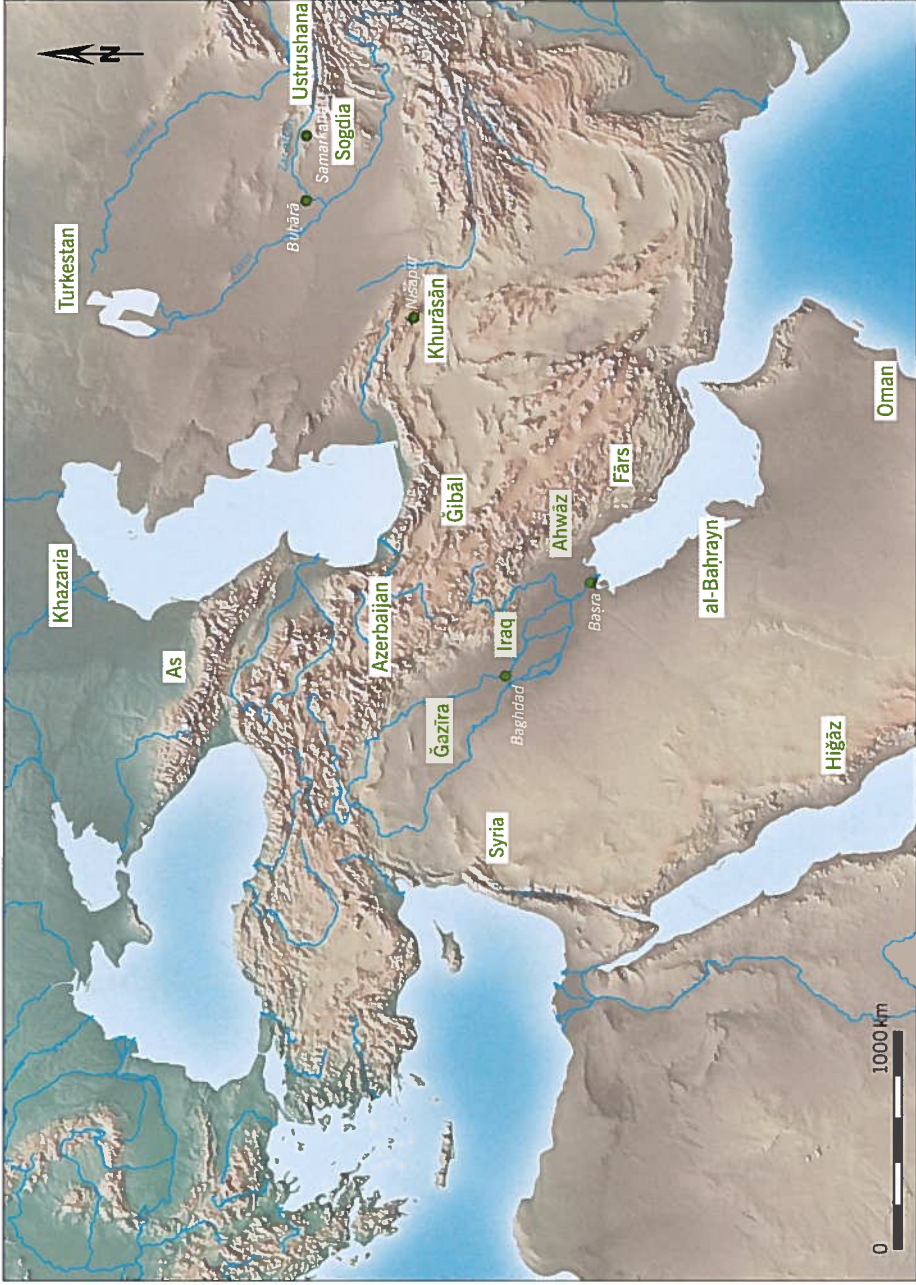


Fig. 13 Map of regions of origins of soldiers and settlers mobilised by the authorities of the caliphate for deployment in the south Caucasus between AD 700 and 860 according to the written sources.

Abb. 13 Karte der Herkunftsregionen von Soldaten und Siedlern, die nach den schriftlichen Quellen zwischen 700 und 860 n. Chr. von den Autoritäten des Kalifats für den Südkaukasus mobilisiert wurden.

stemming from the Sogdian principality of Ustrushana east of Samarkand (now in Tajikistan), and also *mamluks*, i.e. military slaves, originating mainly from the Turkish regions of Central Asia (see Fig. 13). In AD 838 they put an end to Babak's rule in Azerbaijan, after Babak had been also betrayed by his former Armenian allies (de la Vaissière 2007, 176–179; Stark 2008, 252–253; Crone 2012, 67–72).

Mapping the diversity and focal points of Islamic migration

Has this extensive migration of Muslim elites and population groups into the south Caucasus in the first 150 years after the Arab conquest also left archaeological traces? One of the few material remains systematically surveyed so far are the hoards of Arab coins in Armenia; if the mints where these coins originated can be unambiguously identified, we can draw conclusions about the mobility of these objects (Mousheghian et al. 2000/03). We can map all the Umayyad mints whose coins occur in hoards in Armenia: connection lines, however, are drawn only to those places from which coins had definitely

already come into the country in the first half of the 8th century AD (Fig. 14). The main axes of distribution, with few exceptions, connect Armenia with the centres of Umayyad power in Syria, northern Mesopotamia, and Iraq. This image changes impressively for the Abbasid period (AD 750–900); the geographical range of the potential numismatic links appears even wider than the one resulting from the written sources (Fig. 15). However, if we draw the main axes of distribution of the coin material, by means of a network analytic model, on the basis of the multiple joint occurrence of individual mints in hoards³, then these main axes, in accordance with historiography, lead to the Abbasid imperial centre around Baghdad, to Azerbaijan, to eastern Iran, and to Central Asia, the areas of origin of the »new« elites of the Abbasid period (Fig. 16; with an »outlier« to a mint in North Africa).

Focal points of Muslim settlement and power in the south Caucasus emerged, as already mentioned, in the urban centres of Dvin, Naxčavan, Tbilisi, and Partaw, now serving as centres of Arab administration, in the strategic fortresses on the border with Byzantium in Theodosiopolis (*Erzurum*), Melitene, and Kamacha, and at the main settlements on routes across the Caucasus (Fig. 11; see also above). These

3 For the methodological and technical background to this and other network models presented in this paper cf. Preiser-Kapeller/Daim 2015.

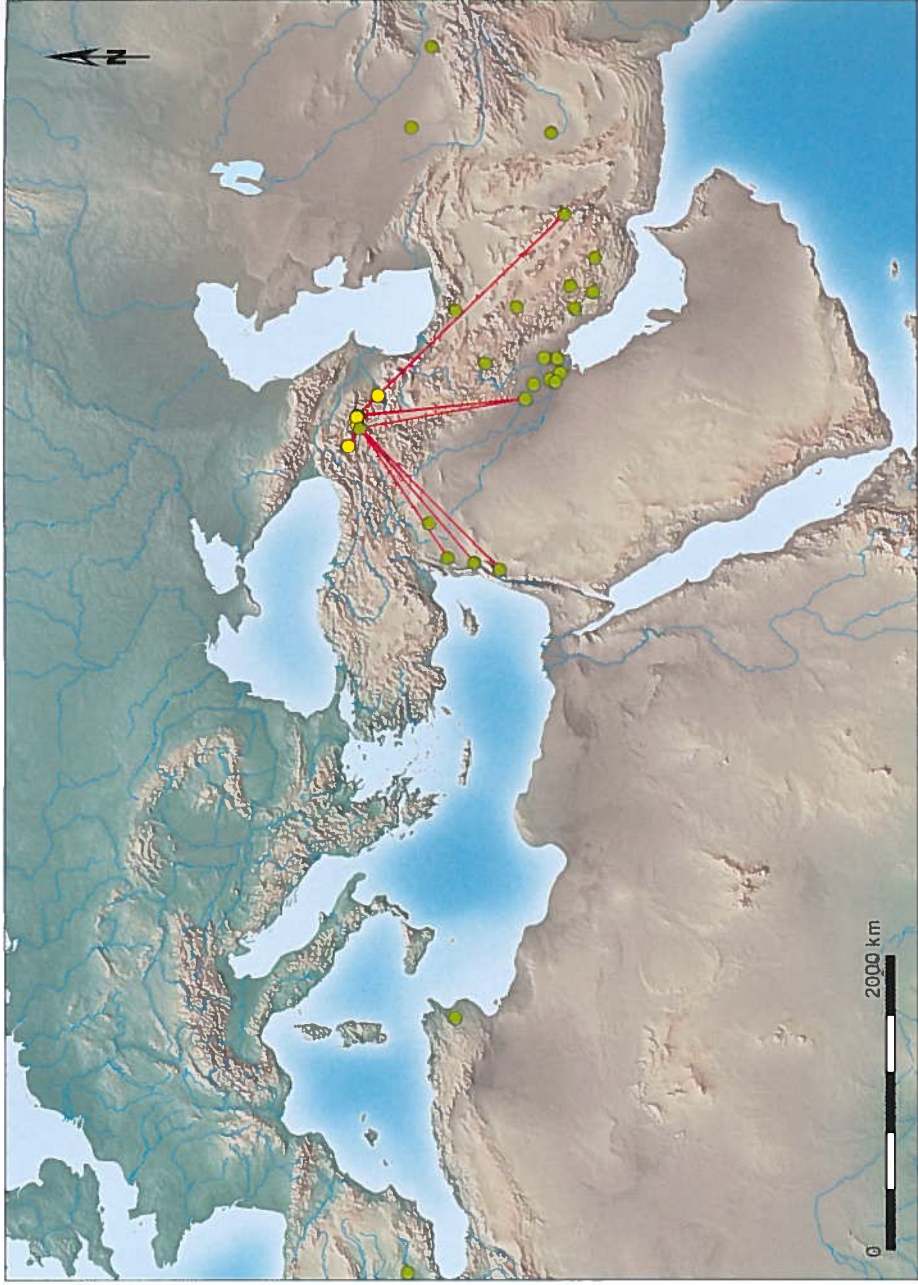


Fig. 14 Map of hoards of Arab coins (yellow) in the Republic of Armenia from the Umayyad period (AD 700–750) and places where these coins were minted (green); red lines connect hoards with mints for coins definitely brought to Armenia in the first half of the 8th century AD.

Abb. 14 Karte von Hortfunden arabischer Münzen (gelb) aus der Umayyadenzeit (700–750 n. Chr.) in der Republik Armenien und Prägestätten dieser Münzen (grün); rote Linien verbinden Hortfunde mit Prägestätten für Münzen, die sicher in der ersten Hälfte des 8. Jhs. n. Chr. nach Armenien gebracht wurden.

were soon augmented, however, in particular by bases in the south of Armenia, near the upper Mesopotamian settlement areas of the Arab groups mentioned above, and at other important junctions in the network of routes (Fig. 11; Hewsen 2001). An analysis of the relative centrality of the different locations in a GIS-supported, distance-weighted network model also illustrates the orientation of the main axes of Muslim migration movements (Fig. 17): on the one hand along the three main access routes from Mesopotamia and Persia to Armenia and to Caucasian Albania, on the other hand along cross-connections from Theodosiopolis in the west to the capital cities of Dvin and Partaw in the east, and from the Araxes valley in the south via Dvin and Tbilisi to the main ridge of the Caucasus in the north. This pattern emerged from the interplay of strategic planning by the central authorities of the caliphate and the preferences and opportunities of the various groups of arrivals from the provinces of the Islamic Empire.

Cooperation and cultural exchange between old and new elites

After a century of Arab domination, the result of the emigration and immigration processes described so far was a

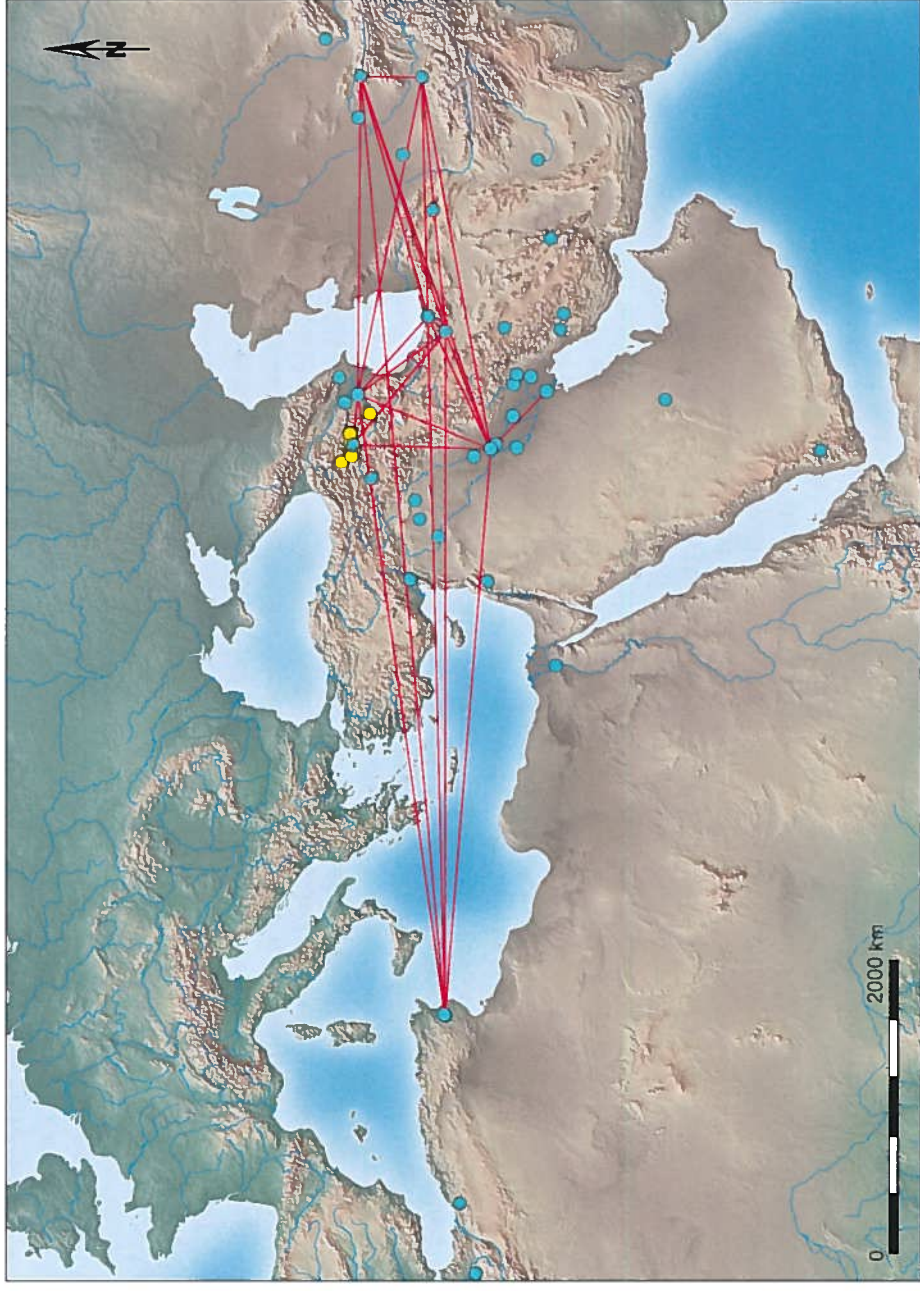
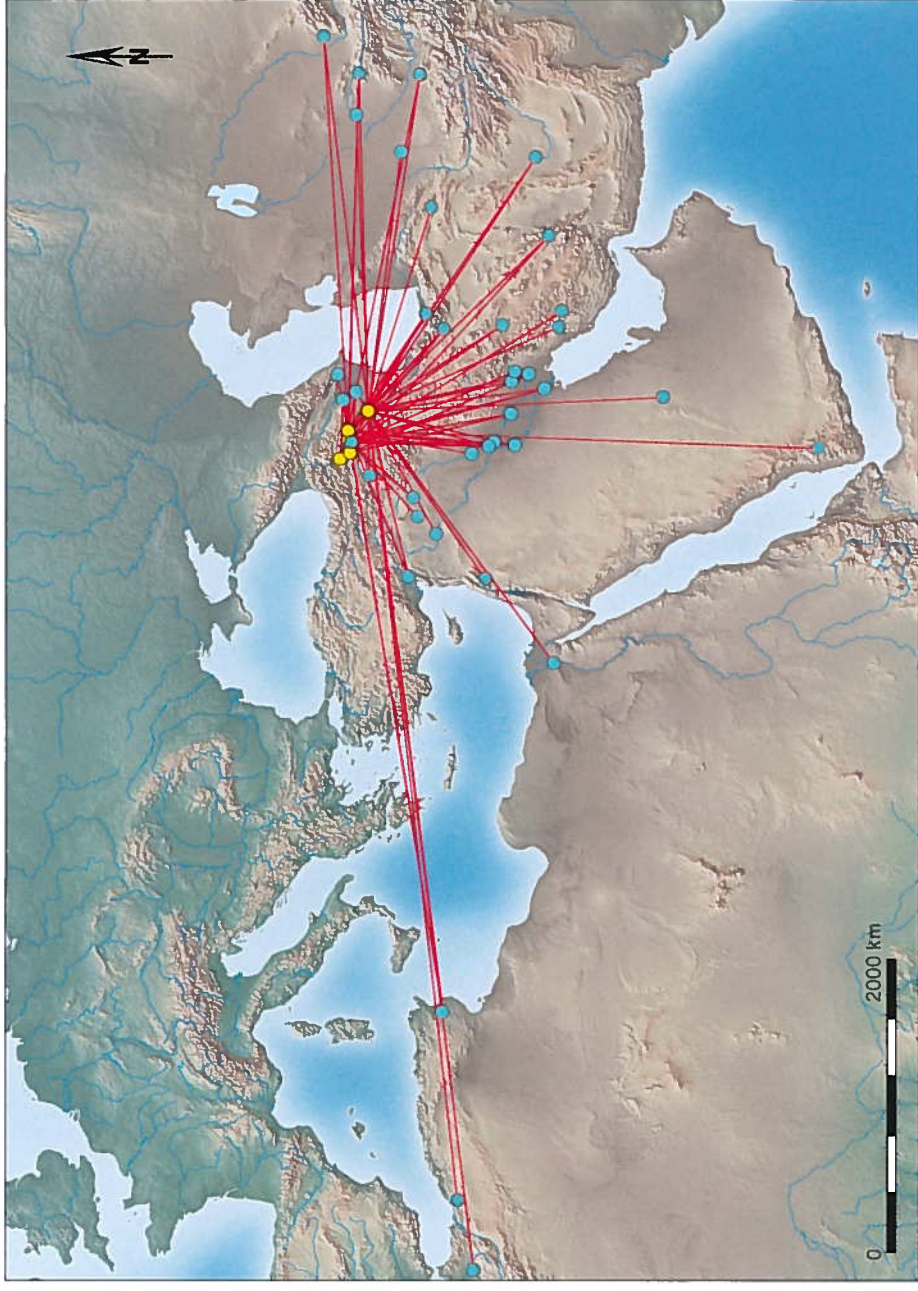
mosaic of centres of Muslim power, but also of new Armenian and Georgian principalities, which, like their new neighbours, were able to profit from the disappearance of competitors from the ancient aristocracy (Fig. 18). As the already mentioned example of the alliance between Babak

Fig. 15 (upper right page) Map of hoards of Arab coins (yellow) in the Republic of Armenia from the Abbasid period (AD 750–900) and the places where these coins were minted (blue); red lines connect hoards with mints for coins definitely brought to Armenia during this period.

Abb. 15 (obere rechte Seite) Karte von Hortfunden arabischer Münzen (gelb) aus der Abbasidenzeit (750–900 n. Chr.) in der Republik Armenien und Prägestätten dieser Münzen (blau); rote Linien verbinden Hortfunde mit Prägestätten für Münzen, die sicher in dieser Periode nach Armenien gebracht wurden.

Fig. 16 (lower right page) Map of hoards of Arab coins (yellow) in the Republic of Armenia from the Abbasid period (AD 750–900) and the places where these coins were minted (blue); the red lines connect mints which co-occur frequently in these hoards during this period and indicate main axes of mobility into al-Arminiya.

Abb. 16 (untere rechte Seite) Karte von Hortfunden arabischer Münzen (gelb) aus der Abbasidenzeit (750–900 n. Chr.) in der Republik Armenien und Prägestätten dieser Münzen (blau); rote Linien verbinden Prägestätten, die häufig zusammen in Hortfunden während dieser Periode auftreten und zeigen die Hauptachsen der Mobilität nach al-Arminiya an.



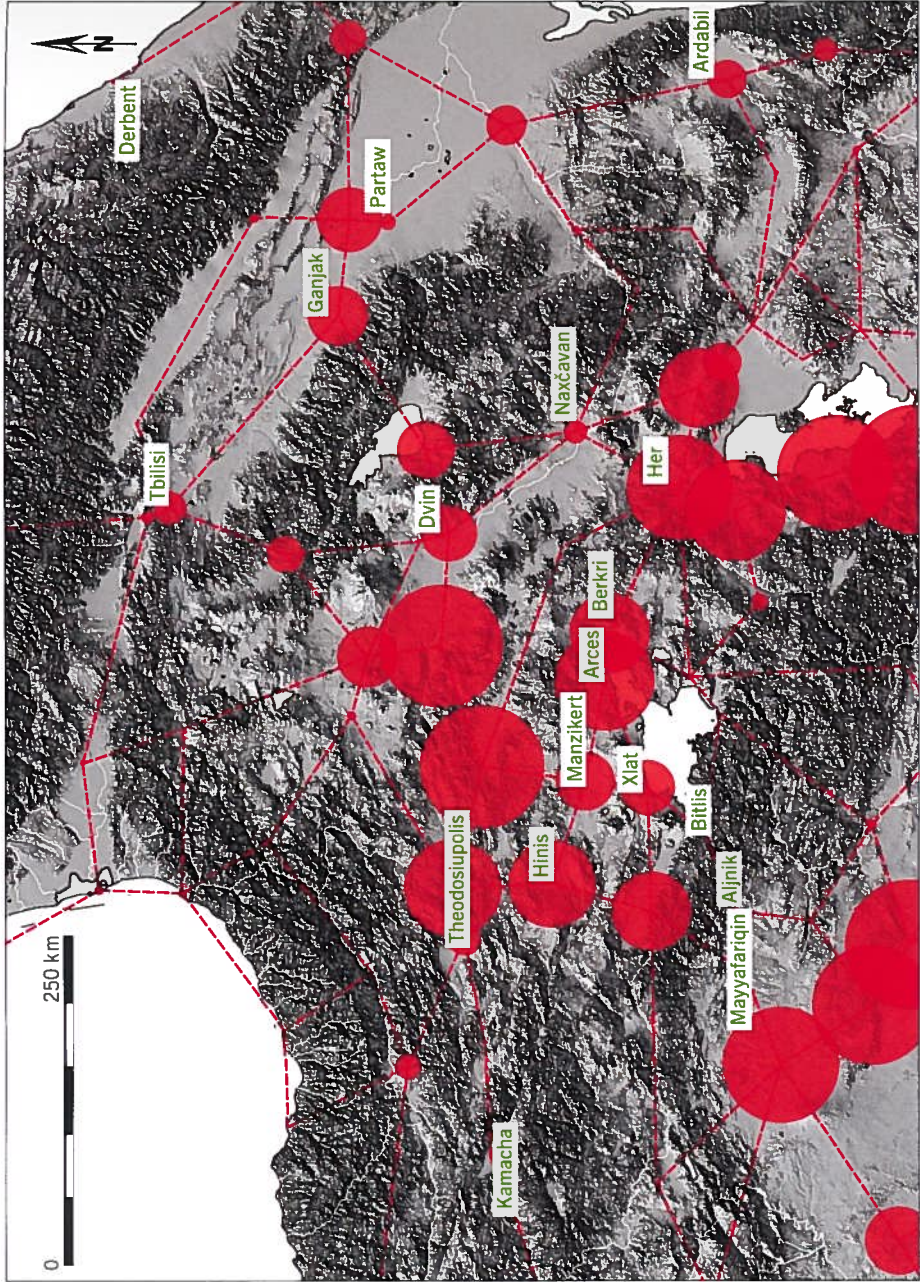


Fig. 17 Map of a distance-weighted network model of the main routes within the south Caucasus in the early medieval period; places (nodes) are sized according to their relative (betweenness) centrality. Focal places of Islamic military, administrative, and settlement activities in the south Caucasus are named in green.

Abb. 17 Karte eines nach Distanzen gewichteten Netzwerkmodells der Hauptrouten im Südkaukasus im frühen Mittelalter; Orte (Knoten) sind in ihrer Größe nach ihrer relativen (Betweenness-)Zentralität unterschieden. Schwerpunkte der islamischen Militär-, Verwaltungs- und Siedlungstätigkeit im Südkaukasus sind mit grünen Buchstaben bezeichnet.

and the Prince of Siwnik demonstrates, these regional leaders were soon ready to cooperate with one another across ethnic-linguistic and religious boundaries, both against competitors of their own or other faiths and against centralising attempts by representatives of the caliphate. Already forty years before Babak's revolt, the princes of the formerly most powerful Armenian family of the Mamikonian, who had been losing ground in the struggle against the representatives of the caliphate, had given one of their princesses in marriage to Ġaḥḥāf, an Arab leader, presumably from northern Mesopotamia; in doing so they also ignored recent provisions of the Armenian Church (decreed at the Synod of Partaw in AD 768) against marriages between Christians and »infidels«. After the emigration of the last Mamikonian to Byzantium in the 770s, Ġaḥḥāf took over not only part of their territorial heritage around the city of Manzikert (today Malazgirt in Turkey; Fig. 11), but also the »family tradition« of the struggle against the competing noble house of the Bagratuni, as well as against the officials of the caliph (Ter-Ghewondyan 1976, 34–40; Garsoïan 1997a, 133 f.).

The Bagratuni, on the other hand, tended to cooperate with the Arab authorities, and thus profited from the dwindling of the Armenian aristocracy in the 8th century AD, rising to be its

most powerful representatives (Garsoïan 1997a, 136–138). At the time of Babak's rebellion, we find the brothers Bagrat and Smbat Bagratuni as lords of Bagrewand in the north and Taron in the south of the country (Fig. 18) and in an alliance with Musa b. Zurara, the Emir of Aljnik and Bitlis near Lake Van (Fig. 11). According to Arab custom, Smbat also bore the teknonym (*Arabic kunya*) Ablabas (»father of Abas«), exemplifying the spread of the use of teknonyms among the Christian aristocracy at this time, indicating the beginning of a reciprocal adoption of customs between the native and immigrant elites (Jones 2007; Signes Codoñer 2014, 245–250).

In AD 838, Bagrat Bagratuni, together with Arab, Sogdian, and Turkish members of the retinue of Caliph al-Mu'tasim, participated in a campaign against Byzantium, which culminated in the conquest of the important city of Amorion in Phrygia (Signes Codoñer 2014, 287–312; Preiser-Kapeller forthcoming). Muslim and Christian elites, however, also increasingly vied with each other in their quest for independence from the Abbasid central power, which was also fading in other regions in the 9th century AD. Already for the time of Hārūn ar-Rašīd, al-Baladhuri describes how the princes of *Armīniya* could only be compelled by force to pay the stipulated taxes and otherwise ruled their areas more or

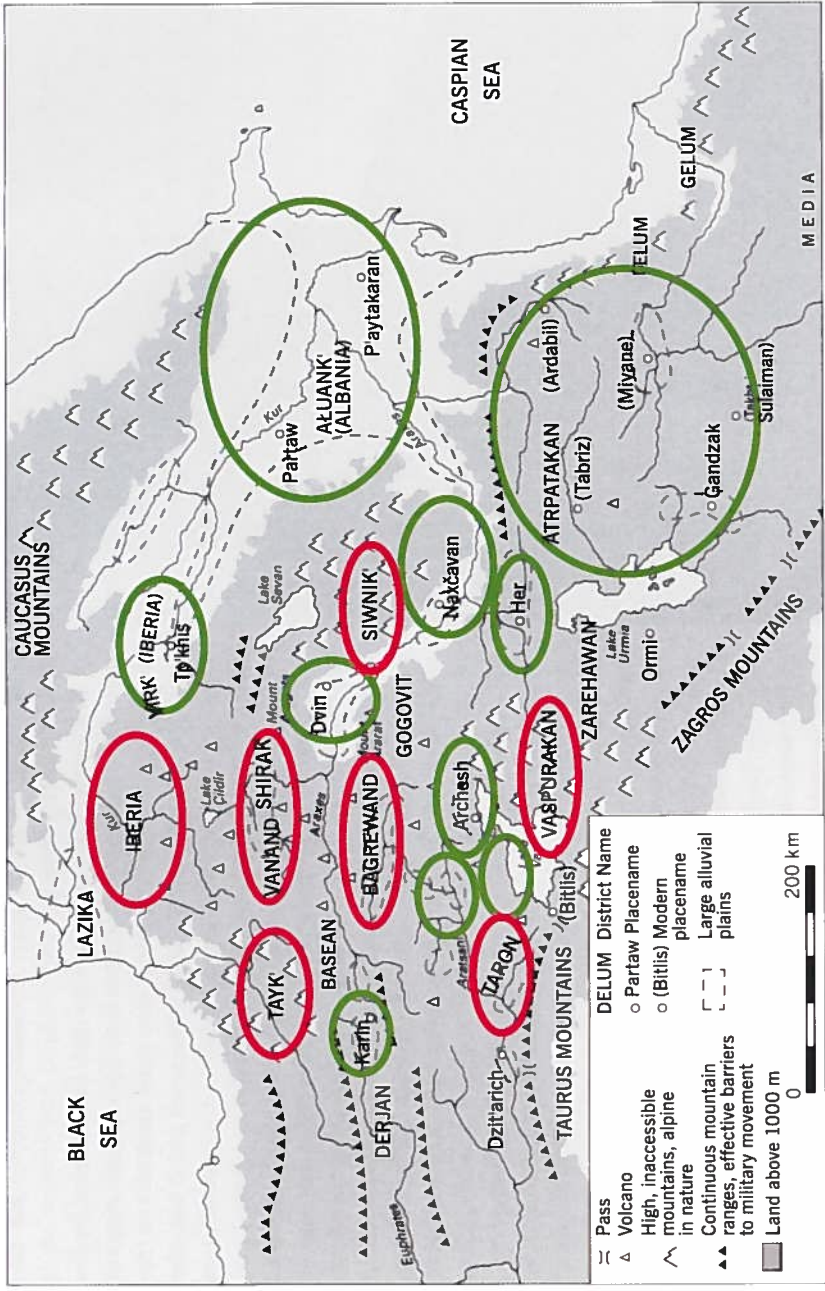


Fig. 18 Map of focal areas of regional lords of Christian (red) and Islamic (green) background in the south Caucasus in the mid-9th century AD.

Abb. 18 Karte der Zentralgebiete von regionalen Machthabern christlichen (rot) oder islamischen (grün) Glaubens im Südkaukasus in der Mitte des 9. Jhs. n. Chr.

less autonomously (al-Baladhuri, Kitāb al Futūḥ 330). In AD 851, Muslim, Armenian, and Georgian regional lords rose up against the caliph's governor named Yūsuf, who was killed. In a last attempt to regain control in the south Caucasus, Caliph al-Mutawakkil (reign AD 847–861) sent the Turkish-born General Bugha »the Elder« with a strong army, including many *mamluks* from Central Asia. In his campaigns, described as cruel in Christian and Islamic sources, Bugha devastated Armenia and Georgia and deported unruly Christian and Muslim princes to the caliph's residence in Sāmarrā' (north of Baghdad), including Bagrat Bagratuni and Musa b. Zurara; others, such as Emir Ishāq ibn Ismā'il of Tbilisi (reign c. AD 833–853), were killed (al-Baladhuri, Kitāb al Futūḥ 331 f.; K'art'lis C'xovreba 328; Gordon 2001). The destruction of established power and settlement structures again opened up possibilities for the settlement of new groups from the retinue of Bugha; while T'ovma Arccruni generally writes about »all peoples of the Muslims«, the Georgian Chronicle and al-Baladhuri report in more detail on the settlement of groups from the north of the Caucasus (Khazars and As/Ossetians), who apparently also converted to Islam (T'ovma Arccruni III.5; K'art'lis C'xovreba, 329; al-Baladhuri, Kitāb al Futūḥ 319). The city of Šamkir in Caucasian Albania (now Azerbaijan), mentioned in al-Baladhuri as a place of settlement of these groups, later became the home of a community of »Kaukasusdeutsche« under the name of »Annenfeld« between AD 1820 and 1941, within the framework of another imperial settlement project (that of Tsarist Russia) (Fig. 19; Auch 2001, 73–78).

The emergence of a new multiplex framework of regional powers

The campaigns of Bugha, however, did not alter the fact that the central power in the Abbasid Caliphate was gradually losing control over its provinces, a process that accelerated after the assassination of Caliph al-Mutawakkil in AD 861. Shortly thereafter, in order to calm the revolting south Caucasian regions, the *mamluk* 'Alī b. Yahyā al-Armani, one of the few converts to Islam of Armenian origin to be found in the sources, who had made a career in the service of the caliphs (in Egypt and Syria), was sent as governor to *Armīniya*. Despite his change of faith, he was obviously more able to reach an agreement with the native aristocracy. He also ensured official recognition of the now dominant position of the princes from the house of Bagratuni as the supreme representatives of both the Christian and Muslim regional potentates, which ultimately led to the crowning of Ašot Bagratuni as King of Armenia with the consent of the caliph in AD 884/885 (Yovhannēs Drasxanakert'i, 27, § 10–12).

This renewed »Armenian« monarchy resembled the old one (from before AD 428, see above) in the relatively weak position of the king vis-à-vis the regional rulers. However, the mosaic of regional rule, in comparison to the period before the Arab conquest, was now enriched by new Muslim emirates of Arab, Iranian, Turkish, and Kurdish origin (Fig. 18). Ethnic and, in particular, religious dividing lines could either be used to legitimise violence in the ongoing competition for power and territory or overcome in order to



Fig. 19 The former Protestant church of the German community in Şəmkir (modern-day Azerbaijan); this city in the mid-9th century AD became the destination of groups newly converted to Islam from north of the Caucasus (Khazars and As), and in AD 1820 of the »Kaukasusdeutsche«, settled by the Russian Tsars in their new territories (under the name »Annenfeld«, until AD 1941).

Abb. 19 Die frühere protestantische Kirche der deutschen Gemeinde in Şəmkir (heute Aserbeidschan); diese Stadt wurde in der Mitte des 9. Jhs. zum Zielort von jüngst zum Islam konvertierten Gruppen von nördlich des Kaukasus (Chasaren und As) und um 1820 von »Kaukasusdeutschen«, die von den russischen Zaren in ihren neu erworbenen Gebieten angesiedelt wurden (unter dem Namen »Annenfeld«, bis 1941).

establish useful alliances (Garsoïan 1997b). The mutual recognition of opponents, not only as of equal rank but also to a certain extent as »similar«, was shown in the use of mutually intelligible forms of visual representation of lordship and other practices (Jones 2007). In the Arab history of ibn Hauqal, for example, the Muslim official Abū l-Qāsim (a representative of the Emir of Azerbaijan) in AD 955 compels his Armenian namesake, Prince Abū l-Qāsim, to pay tribute, along with the Armenian princes from the »Banu Dayrani« (the house of Arçruni ruling in Vaspurakan around Lake Van, here named after Prince Grigor-Derenik Arçruni, reign c. AD 857–887) and the »Banu Sunbāt« (the dynasty of the Bagratuni, here named after King Smbat I Bagratuni, reign AD 892–914), who were thus included in the scheme of tribal assignments according to Arab tradition (ibn Hauqal,

Kitāb şūrat al-arḍ II 347 f.; Garsoïan 1997b, 164–165; Dadoyan 2011, 122 f.).

Beyond the elite, we have very little information for the period under consideration as to how the »co-habitation« of indigenous and new arrivals may have worked »on the ground«, especially in the urban settlements which were the focal points of Muslim migrations. Dvin (in Arab sources *Dabil*) maintained its function as a hub of interregional commerce and is mentioned as a centre of trade and craftsmanship (especially for the production of textiles) by various Arab authors of the 10th century AD; from them we learn that the city had a big Muslim population centred on a main mosque, but also many Christian (Armenian) inhabitants who prayed in their churches. In addition, merchant communities from all over the Islamic world, but also from the Byzantine Empire and the realm of the Khazars to the north, established themselves there. Dvin also remained under Muslim rulers for most of the time after the establishment of the Bagratuni monarchy, but even in the short periods when the Armenian kings took control of it, the cohabitation of various religious and ethnic groups was not put into question, not least, as one Arab historian describes, in order not to disturb commerce and the revenues resulting from it (Manandian 1965; Gaube/Leisten 1994; Garsoïan 2012, 31–33).

The new fragile balance between kings, princes, and emirs, however, could only be maintained in *Armīniya* in the »window of opportunity« afforded by the weakness of the neighbouring great powers; this window closed first at the beginning of the 11th century AD with the renewed expansion of the Byzantines into the south Caucasus and then again in the later 11th century AD with the advance of the Seljuks (Garsoïan 1997c)⁴. But the subsequent empires, up to and including the Ottomans in the 19th century AD, also had to recognise the strong power of various regional lords. These are, however, different stories about the mobility and migration of elites and populations, of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, stories which continued until the late 19th century AD when they were curtailed by the rise of nationalism, whose ravages are still on-going today.

Conclusion

Recently, empires have been described as »regimes of entanglements« which »can be conceived as network structures in which certain structural and habitual circumstances – principles, rules, standards, and mutual expectations – allow for the establishment of long term linkages«; in these »regimes [...] religions and ethnicities, as well as certain functionalities interact.« (Schuppert 2014, 28 f.). The working of these imperial formations depended on the movement of officials, troops, craftsmen, scholars, and other individuals and thus they can also be perceived as »regimes of mobility« (Preiserkapeller forthcoming). The impact of these regimes on the south Caucasus became manifest in the manifold forced

and deliberate migrations of elites and populations from these regions into neighbouring imperial spheres, all the way to Italy and North Africa in the west and Central Asia in the east. In turn, officials, troops, and workforces were settled in the south Caucasus by the respective imperial centres, but these also started processes of migration on their own initiative. The heterogeneity and intricacy of the migrations which we have observed here took place within the imperial frameworks of what C. Wickham (2005, 56 f.) has categorised as the »strong states« of the early medieval eastern Mediterranean region (in contrast to the »weak states« of the post-Roman west); we may assume an even higher degree of complexity for medieval migration processes, in the absence of such overarching political frameworks. On the other hand, the constant competition between and division among groups may have fostered alliances and accommodations between indigenous elites and new arrivals more intensively than a clear-cut front line would have done. At the same time, these narratives of transnational exchange should not cloak the amount of devastation and displacement created through warfare, due to both imperial ambitions and regional competition. This human suffering is vividly described, again across ethnic-religious-linguistic frontiers, in Armenian, Georgian, Greek, Arab, and Persian sources.

More generally, the heterogeneity and complexity reconstructed from these sources should also sound a note of cau-

tion against simplistically imagining actual migration processes in pre-modern periods in terms of uniformly coloured moving masses on historical maps, or of tempting collective identities such as »Muslims« or »Germanics«, or indeed of such creations of modern-day scholarship as »Bell Beakers« or »Yamnaya people«; in most cases, they will not do justice to the dynamics of mobility and the multiplicity of identities of migrating groups that we have to reckon with.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the organisers of the 9th Archaeological Conference of Central Germany for their invitation to participate and all participants for the discussion after my presentation; I am particularly grateful to F. Daim (Director General of the RGZM Mainz) for his valuable feedback on the paper.

This study was undertaken within the framework of the projects »Digitising Patterns of Power (DPP). Peripheral Mountains in the Medieval World« (Principal Investigator: M. Popović; <<http://dpp.oeaw.ac.at/>>) and »Moving Byzantium: Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency« (Principal Investigator: C. Rapp; <<http://rapp.univie.ac.at/>>) at the Institute for Medieval Research/Division for Byzantine Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

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4 In Arab and Persian sources of the later period we also sometimes find attempts to divide the south Caucasus more clearly in a »Christian Armīniya« and an »Islamic Azer-

baijan«, but these did not do justice to the actual entanglement of communities and territories (Vacca 2015).

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