

CAUCASUS HISTORY – Postclassical Period

Overview

The name Caucasus is mentioned first time in an ancient Greek play writer Aeschylus's tragedy *Prometheus Bound* in the 5th century BCE. According to the Greek sources, in 1600 BCE the Hittites called the inhabitants of the Southern coast of the Black Sea Ka z-kaz. Also according to the Greek mythology, it was during the 8th century Greek mariners who were sailing along the Black Sea began to built colonies in the North Caucasus, and traveled along the western coastal plain of Georgia, Colchis.

Plinius the Elder's *Natural History* (Naturalis Historia) (77-79 CE) derives the name of the Caucasus from the Scythian *kroy-khasis* (white with snow). Later, the name Caucasus appears in a Georgian Chronicle *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (Life of Kartli) in the 5th century CE .

In the 19th century German linguists, Orientalist and traveler Julius Klaproth in his *Geographisch-historische Beschreibung des ostlichen Kaukasus* (Geographical and historical description of the eastern Caucasus) mentions that the origin of the name Caucasus must come from Persian name *Kuh-i Kaf*, which means the mountain of Kaf.

The Caucasus is one of the most diverse, ethnically and linguistically, and challenging regions on earth. It has been regarded as a land of conflict, and the Caucasus' cultural and political history is a most turbulent one that reflects the complex succession of peoples and influences from many neighboring countries. Although many routes of migration, invasion, and trade have passed through it, the Caucasus was an isolated region, and had no border with Europe.

The Caucasus is a bridge between Europe and Asia. The borders of the Caucasus are the Kuma–Manych geological depression to the north bounded by the Sea of Azov and Kerch Strait and the Black Sea on the west, and the Caspian Sea on the east.

Early kingdoms and empires like the Achaemenid Empire, the Seleucid Empire, the Roman Empire, the Parthian Empire, the Pontus Kingdom, the Sassanid Empire, the Byzantine Empire, Abbasid Dynasty, Khazar Empire, Seljuks, Mongols and Russians all had ambitious designs on the Caucasus. Many empires have passed through the Caucasus and many feudal dynasties frequently replaced one another in conquests that were generally motivated by economics. The Caucasus has been an arena of incessant conflicts stemming from the struggles with aggressors like the Russians, Ottomans, Persians, Arabs and the Khanates of the Golden Horde who attempted to control this strategic area.

Even after so many centuries of invasion and foreign domination, the war-torn Caucasus has been able to survive and continued to develop and preserve their unique culture and traditions.

Events

Kievan Rus 880-1240



The first Eastern Slavic state, the Kievan State, was established to the north of Khazaria in the Caucasus in the 9th century. In this century, Khazaria continued to be the main zone of commerce between northern Europe and southwestern Asia. It was the Rus and the Pechenegs from the north who ended their domination in the Caucasus in the 10th century.

Khazar civilization influenced the early

development of the first East Slavic state at Kiev and played a great role in early Kievan history. They were active and successful traders; and maintained lively commercial contacts with the Arabs, the Byzantines, and various Asian societies. In the 8th and 9th centuries, many East Slavic tribes paid tribute to the Khazars.



Khazar domination in the region lasted until their defeat by the Kievan prince Svyatoslav I in 966. The Kievan State began to expand its territory and attacked the Khazars to end their dominance in the region. The Kievan prince Svyatoslav I stopped paying tribute to the Khazars and conquered their capital Itil (Atil) in 967.

Following this, the Khazar–Byzantine alliance collapsed. Trade and collection of tribute were the Khazars' main source of revenue, and their decline began with the loss of their primary source of income. Kievan Rus took over most of the Khazar lands.

During the reign of Svyatoslav I the Khazar fortress of Sarkel was conquered. A new Russian city, Belaya Vezha, was built in Sarkel and a new Russian trading outpost Tmutarakan in the Taman peninsula appeared. These cities became commercial centers for trade between the Caucasus and the Near East.

The Byzantines, too, lost their power in the region. A Byzantine bishop had been sent to reside in Tmutarakan. When Tmutarakan fell, the weakened Byzantines had to recognize Rus, and a confederation of Kievan Rus and Byzantine forces attacked the Khazars and defeated them in 1016.

Pechenegs

In the south, the Kievan Russians were also fighting the Pechenegs. Weakened by constant wars, the Pechenegs lost their strength and were destroyed completely towards the end of the 11th century.

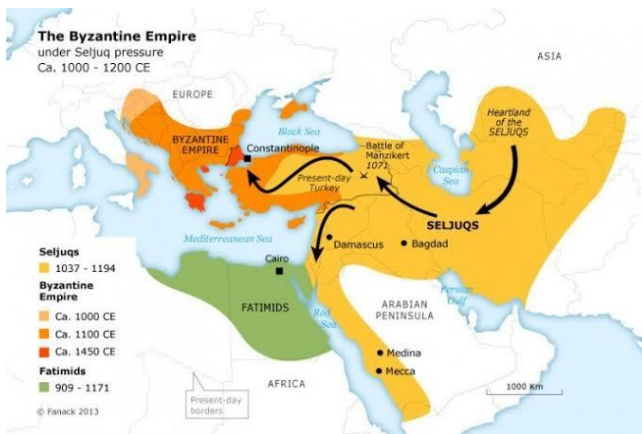
Cuman-Kipchak Confederation

A nomadic Turkic people related to the Pechenegs who formed a tribal confederation were the Cumans, also known as the Polovtsy or Kipchaks. They set up the Cuman-Kipchak confederation which also included tribes of the North Caucasus. Most of the North Caucasus was part of the confederation.



In the 10th century, the Cumans extended from the southern part of Central Asia to the upper Irtys River. The western branch of the Cumans were in close contact with Kievan Rus'; based on the chronicles, the first encounter between Rus' and the Cumans took place in 1055 and resulted in a peace agreement. In the wake of their defeat by the Mongols in Subcaucasia in 1220, the Cuman

khans sought, and received, aid from the princes of Rus'. Nonetheless, even the combined Rus'-Cuman forces were no match for the Mongols who defeated them in 1223 at the Kalka River. The Cumans suffered the same fate in 1237 during the Mongols' second invasion of Eastern Europe. It was in this same period of the late 13th-early 14th century that both the Cumans and the Tatars converted to Islam.



Seljuks in the South Caucasus

The Seljuks established a powerful nomadic empire in 1040, which included most of Central Asia and Persia. During the reign of Sultan Alp Arslan, the Seljuks' intention was to invade the Byzantine Empire. Alp Arslan captured south Georgia and western Armenia in 1064-1068.

Battle of Malazgirt (Manzikert)

Georgia and Armenia had to pay annual tribute to keep their autonomy. Byzantine territory was invaded in 1068, and the Byzantines were defeated in 1071 at the Battle of Malazgirt.

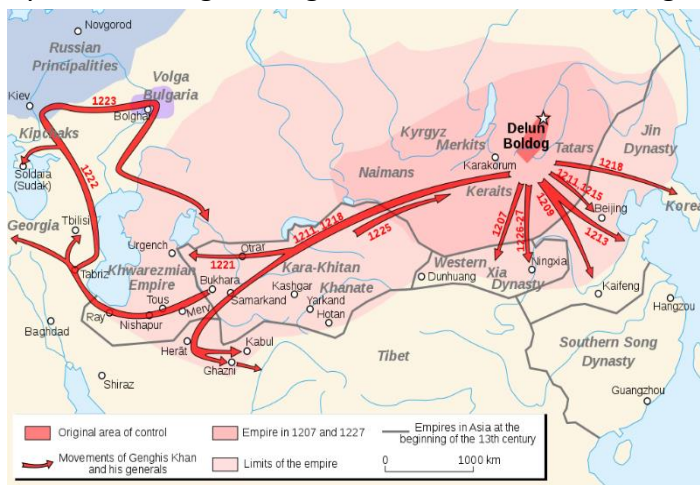
Shortly afterwards, Alp Arslan was killed by his political enemies, and in 1077 the Seljuk Empire split into the Seljuk sultanate of Rum in Anatolia and the Great Seljuks. The Seljuk sultanate of Rum established its partial control over the South Caucasus.

In 1092, the Seljuk vizier Nizam-al-Mulk was killed, and Malik Shah died soon after. The Seljuk state fell into turmoil. After the Seljuks lost their power, King David IV of Georgia refused to pay tribute to them and expelled the Seljuks from Kartli. Georgia was completely freed from Seljuk rule at the Battle of Didgori in 1121.

In order to repel the Seljuk invasion and to save the kingdom of Cilicia, Armenians became an ally of the Mongols.

In 1136, the Great Seljuks began to decline and the Sultan appointed an atabek to rule over the remainder of the South Caucasus and northern Persia. Later these atabeks began to fight against the Great Seljuks and also fought against the Georgians. This atabek state collapsed in 1225 when the Mongols conquered the region.

By 1207, during the reign of Queen Tamar of Georgia, a coalition between Armenia and Georgia was established to liberate the northeastern part of Armenia from the Seljuks, a region which included the cities of Ani, Kars and Dvin. Under Tamar, the region reached its Golden Age and literature, fine arts and music were well-developed.



Mongol Conquest of the Caucasus

The Mongols first appeared in the Caucasus in 1220. They reached the Armenian plains and from there they moved towards the northern Caucasus

and occupied Georgia.

The Mongols then reached the lowlands of Dagestan and Chechnya. They invaded Alania in 1222. To protect their territory, the Alans made an alliance with the Cumans, but later the Cumans broke the alliance at the request of the Mongols. The Mongols defeated the Alans, and the Cumans learned a hard lesson when they were vanquished in 1223.

Khwarezmian Dynasty and the Mongols

In 1220, the Mongols attacked Bukhara and the Khwarezmian capital Samarkand. Shah Ala ad-Din Muhammad died during this assault. The new shah, Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu continued struggling against the Mongols in the Caucasus. He was able to gather his army and launched an assault in Azerbaijan in 1225 and attacked Georgia and looted Tbilisi in 1226.

A full-scale Mongol conquest of the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia began in 1236, in which the Kingdom of Georgia, the Sultanate of Rum, the Empire of Trebizond, and the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia were subjugated. The Caucasus for the Mongols was a gateway to Russia and the Black Sea. To revive trade between Europe and Asia, they secured the Great Silk Road.

After they defeated the Georgians and the Armenians, the Mongols continued north to invade Kievan Rus.

Ilkhanate and the South Caucasus

At the beginning of Mongol domination the local rulers were left alone in the South Caucasus. In 1243, permanent formal taxes were enacted which resulted in several uprisings. The Mongols began losing control over khanates in the Caucasus, Russia, and Central Asia.

It was the Ilkhanate state, which became a separate khanate after the fragmentation of the Mongols, which invaded the whole South Caucasus in 1256.



The Ilkhans had conquered the North Caucasus in 1235. During the time of Ögödei Khan, Ilkhanate troops began to invade Kievan Rus. The weakened Kievan state collapsed in 1240. In 1240, except for Dagestan, Chechen and Ingush territory, the conquest of the North Caucasus was completed.

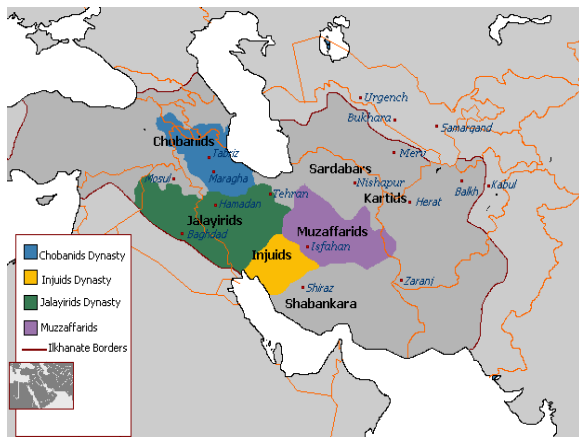
Ilkhanate and Golden Horde

Around 1260, relations between the leaders of the Mongol states grew worse. There was a constant fight between Hülegü, the ruler of the Ilkhanate state and Berke, khan of the Golden Horde. Berke invaded the South Caucasus and Hülegü conquered the North Caucasus.

The Golden Horde got support from the Muslim Mamluks in Egypt and Muslim Turks in Asia Minor. The Ilkhanate state eventually lost power, and the South Caucasus was left in chaos.



King Giorgi V, taking advantage of this chaotic situation, liberated Eastern Georgia in 1320 and annexed western Georgia.



Armenia and Arran fell under the influence of two Mongol successor states: the Chobanids and the Jalayirids. 1357 the Golden Horde regained control of Arran. But, the Jalayirids pushed the Golden Horde out of the South Caucasus and established full control over the region. In 1374 the Jalayirids split and lost control of the region.

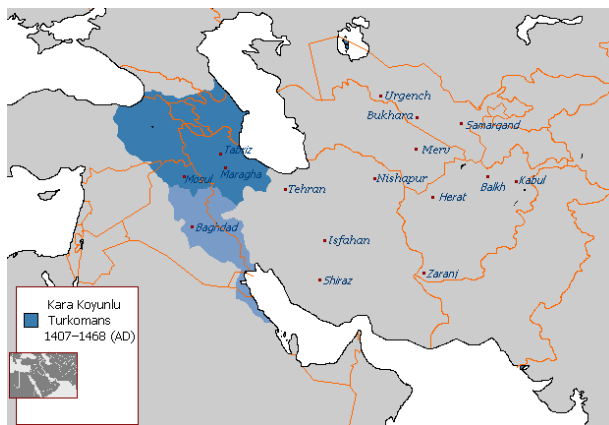
Timurid Empire 1370-1507



The Turco-Mongol Timur the Lame began to conquer lands in Persia and the Caucasus. The ruler of the Golden Horde, Khan Tokhtamysh, noticing the problems in the South Caucasus, launched an attack on Arran and Armenia in 1385. But Timur the Lame reached the South Caucasus in 1386 and subdued Armenia and Georgia.

Timur chased Tokhtamysh into the Chechen plains and finally defeated him in 1395. Timur also reached Dagestan and occupied the territory by 1396.

After Timur died in 1405, his son Mirza took control in the Caucasus, but he also died two years later.



Horde of Qara Qoyunlu

After the death of Timur, his successor Mirza Shah took control of the Caucasus, however, he died two years later. The Turkmen Horde of the Qara Qoyunlu (Black Sheep Turkomans), a vassal of Jalajirids, gained control over Arran. They ruled Azerbaijan, Armenia, northwest Iran and eastern Turkey.

Horde of Ak Koyunlu

The Horde of the Ak Koyunlu (White Sheep Turkomans) took over Armenia after Timur's death, and completely conquered the entire territory of the Kara Koyunlu in 1468.

Kingdom of Georgia Disintegrates

After the conquest of Constantinople by the



Ottomans in 1453, the Georgian kingdom lost trade links with Byzantium and began to disintegrate. The kingdom was divided into four principdoms: Kartli, Kakheti and Imereti and Meskheti (Samtskhe).

Later the small kingdom Svaneti, Guria, Abkhazia and Odishi were also separated from the Imereti principdom.



End of the Mongol Rule

A civil war caused the Golden Horde to split in 1440; and the Kazan, Astrakhan and Crimea khanates broke away from the Golden Horde.

Kiev fell after the decline of the Byzantines, a main trading partner and a major source of their wealth. The Kievan state, besides internal fights, fragmented again and fell.

The ruler of the new Muscovite state, Ivan III, ended the domination of the Golden Horde in 1480.

After the end of the Mongol occupation in 1480, the Russian rulers embarked on an expansionist course which lasted for centuries.

Russian Expeditions in the Caucasus

The Russians began their expedition to the Caspian and the North Caucasian steppe in the 16th century. In 1552, Ivan IV (the Terrible)'s forces annexed the Kazan khanate, enhancing his prestige. One of the main reasons behind this was Russia's interest in gaining access to warm-water seas by extending the empire towards Persia and India. Kazan was vital to Moscow's



eastern trade. It was also an outpost to challenge British interest in Central Asia and Persian trade for fur.

The conquest of Kazan had been motivated by economics. Ivan IV also wanted to obtain new farm lands. With the annexation of Kazan, Russian peasants began to move into the fertile lands in Volga and Kama river basins.

The destruction of the Tatar Khanate and the conquest of the Astrakhan Khanate in 1556 marked the beginning of Russia's interest in the Caucasus. With the conquest of Kazan, Russia became a multiethnic state, and the conquest of Astrakhan allowed the Russians to gain access to the Caspian Sea.

The first Russian advance into the northern steppes of the Caucasus ended in a military setback. Muscovy managed to expand into what is now the Stavropol and Krasnodar areas and in 1559, built one fortress at Tarki on the mouth of the Sunzha, and another in 1567 at the point where the Terek and Sunzha rivers merged. However, the Russians lost their war against the Ottomans and Dagestanis in 1604 and were pushed back to Astrakhan.

In the same period, the Russians also began to implement policies to assimilate the Circassians. There are claims that Ivan IV's marriage to Maria Temrukovna, a Circassian woman and the daughter of the powerful Kabardian Prince Temriuk, was the justification for the Russian expansion into the Caucasus.

In the North Caucasus, some Chechen princes supported the Russians. In 1583, the Chechens made an alliance with the Cossacks led by Shikh-Murza Okotsky and assaulted Ottoman troops that were crossing from Derbent to the Sea of Azov to help the Crimean Khanate. The Ottoman troops were defeated and their transit from Derbent to the Sea of Azov was hampered.

Chechen princes even helped the Russians to build a fortress Terek Gordok in 1587. Shikh-Murza Okotsky became the first Chechen ambassador in the tsarist court.

In 1604, Tsar Boris Godunov also tried to use the North Caucasus as a gateway for his planned actions in Persia for both political and economic reasons, but was defeated by the joint forces of the Dagestanis and the Ottomans in 1605. The Russian forces in Sunja, Sulak and Terek were all destroyed and the Russian forces had to pull back to Astrakhan.

The first time Russian troops appeared in Georgia, in the South Caucasus in the 15th century, was when the Kakheti Kings sent an Embassy to Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible in Moscow, who sent the first Russian detachment to Georgia. But the Georgian King, pressured by Persia, was obliged to ask the Russian troops, quartered in Kakheti fortresses, to leave the country.

In 1567, Ivan IV sent 500 soldiers to Georgia. The Crimean Khan, an Ottoman vassal, was angered by the Russian maneuver and destroyed Moscow in 1571, together with Ukrainians under ataman Dashkevitch, who took part in their march on Moscow.



The Persian Safavid Empire

In 1501 the Safavids seized control of the Ak Koyunlu territory. Shah Ismail I expanded his territory to the South Caucasus, Persian Azerbaijan and most of Iraq with the help of the Qizilbashi. Shi'i Islam became the official religion of the dynasty, and the Qizilbashi were Shi'i militant groups who originated in Azerbaijan and Anatolia from the late 13th century. Some of them contributed to the formation of the Safavids.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Safavids and the Ottomans raided the northeast Caucasus many times, but never fully established their control over it.

Safavid and Ottoman Empires - Battle of Chaldiran

The Ottomans saw the rise of the Safavids and Shia Islam as a threat in eastern Anatolia. In 1514 the Ottoman sultan Selim I invaded Armenia, which was under the control of the Safavids. However, the Safavids were not ready to confront the Ottomans and they left the area. However, the Ottoman forces defeated the Safavid army at the Battle of Chaldiran and captured their capital, Tabriz. Despite their victory, the Ottomans decided to retreat because they did not want to spend the winter there.

This Ottoman–Safavid war lasted 40 years and only ended with the Treaty of Amasya in 1566 which lasted 20 years. With this treaty, the Safavids lost most of eastern Anatolia and Armenia. Armenia and Georgia were divided equally between the two Empires. The treaty also demarcated the border between the Safavid and the Ottoman empires.

The Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp many times incorporated the Caucasus into the Safavid Empire. They held the eastern part of Georgia and Azerbaijan till 1553.

Later, Shah Abbas I expanded Safavid rule and increased his influence in the North Caucasus. He deported thousands of Georgians, Armenians and Circassians to Persia. With this, he managed to reduce the power of the Qizilbash and replaced it with the Caucasians. This system survived until the fall of the Qajar Dynasty in 1925.



The Ottoman-Safavid War - Battle of Childir 1578–1590

After the death of Shah Tahmasp, The Ottoman sultan Murat III conquered most of the South Caucasus. The new Shah Ismail II showed hostility to the Ottomans' presence in the Caucasus.

Murat III's troops began to cross the Georgian border and the fragmented Georgians could not halt their advance. In 1578, the Ottomans defeated the joint Safavid-Georgian forces in the Battle of Chyldyr. The Ottomans annexed Tiflis and Derbent, and gained access to the Caspian Sea.

In 1590, Shah Abbas I had to sign the Treaty of Constantinople with the Ottomans and ceded the South Caucasus to them. However, the Persians quickly regained their strength and Shah Abbas I forced the Ottomans out of Persian Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus around 1622.

During the reign of Sultan Murat IV, the Ottomans controlled the entire South Caucasus except for western Georgia, and ended the war with the Treaty of Zuhab signed in 1639. Armenia was divided between the Ottomans and the Persians till 1914. After Shah Abbas I died in 1629, western Georgia and Kartli fell under Safavid control. Although Kakheti resisted the Persians and hoped to get help from the Ottomans and the Russians to unite the divided land, this support never came. Having built a good relationship with the Persians, Kartli secured its territory, but never gained its independence.

Discussions/Questions:

- 1- What were the long-term effects of the Persian Safavid occupation of the Caucasus?
- 2- What was the impact of the Mongol conquest in the South Caucasus?

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POLITICAL HISTORY

Government:

South Caucasus

Georgia: In Georgia, the state administration was centralized, and the government structure rested on a highly developed feudal system. In this feudal state, the kings enjoyed the highest authority. There was also a royal darbazi (advisory committee), which could pass legislation. The nobles were allowed to keep their domains in trust from the sovereign, but in return they had to provide support to the king during his campaigns.

The central administration consisted of five viziers (ministers), the chancellor, the minister of war, the lord chamberlain, the chancellor of the exchequer, and the atabeg (lord). The provinces were ruled by eristavi (frontier governor) till the 13th century and they had exceptional privileges and autonomous rights. The towns were headed by an amiri and large cities were governed by an amirt-amiri.

The Vilayet of Gurjistan was created by the Mongols and included the whole South Caucasus. It was divided into eight tumans. Five of them belonged to Georgians, the remaining three tumans were Armenian. The Mongols did not rule the Vilayet directly, instead the kings were allowed to rule their own domains after the Khan gained their trust. The governing system was different in each vilayet since the Mongols preferred to use the local, already existing governing structure. They sent their Darughachi or Basqaqs to monitor the Georgian administration closely so that tributes were collected and taxes were paid.

Under Persian rule, the Georgian kingdoms continued to reign locally over a collection of smaller states. However, under Ottoman rule, the administrative system was divided into vilayets (provinces) which were governed by a vali (governor general) or pasha (high military official) appointed by the sultan. The provinces included sanjaks (subprovinces) that were governed by a mutasarrif (lieutenant governor).

By the 16th century, western Georgia and Armenia had fallen under Ottoman rule, and became Ottoman pashalyks (provinces). Within his province, the pasha had the highest administrative, financial and military authority. Provinces consisted of sanjaks (sub province) and were governed by beys (provincial governor).

Armenia: At the top of the Armenian state was the King. The King ruled the state with the help of the court. He had unlimited power and made all decisions, however, he also consulted with the State Council.

The state's ruling class consisted of major and minor feudal landlords. Major feudal lordship was hereditary. Minor landlords gained their positions based on their service. The State Council included only major landlords.

When the Mongols completed the conquest of Armenia, and captured Northern Iraq and Syria in 1244, the Georgian and Armenian states became their vassals. The Mongols followed a policy of eliminating the local ruling class and noble families, and abolished the traditional Armenian feudal statehood, incorporating their territory with the adjacent states.

After the Mongol invasion ended in the 15th century, several independent states formed in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

It was during Qara Qoyunlu, the rulers of the dynasty began to appoint Armenian princes as rulers in the provinces.

In the late 16th century, when the Ottoman Empire conquered the whole of Transcaucasia, the Ottoman authorities built up their relations with the local rulers following the vassal pattern.

Under the suzerainty of the Persians, Armenian administrative units were called khanates. In Armenian khanates, the khan was appointed by the Persian Shah and he was the highest authority. The Christian population had to pay head and land taxes. Only the clergy was exempt from these taxes.

In Eastern Armenia, there were a few principalities such as Zeytun, Artsakh, Syunik and Gardman that maintained their autonomy. They were ruled by meliks (kings) who held the highest authority. They had their own vassal population, troops, and holdings. However, the khans and meliks all had to pay tax to the Royal Treasury, and they were also required to join the Shah's army with their armies.

Azerbaijan: The Caucasian Albanian state was ruled by a prince who was entitled to issue laws and lead the military forces. There was also an Advisory Council and the head of the Council was the Albanian prince. Caucasian Albania, which included today's territory of Azerbaijan, dissolved in the 8th century.

During the Abbasid Caliphate, Azerbaijan became part of the Caliphate's territory. In the 9th century, as the Caliphate lost its strength this led to the appearance of a number of independent states like Shirvanshahs, Shaddadis, Ravvadids, Sallarids and Sajids in the Caliphate. These states were ruled by individual commanders and former Arab successors. Urban administrative institutions formed and improved in this period.

During the period of the Seljuks, the territory became the vassal of the empire and was governed by atabegs and the states of the Shirvanshah (located in the modern Azerbaijan Republic, from the mid-9th century to the early 16th century) and Eldenizs dynasties governed by an emir. The members of ruling dynasty were called khass or taj.

The Mongol conquest left a devastating impact on the Azerbaijani people, and from 1239 to 1358-1359 the territory was the part of the state of Ilkhanate. During this period, the territory was ruled by Mongol generals and divided among the ruling dynasty and the military-nomadic aristocracy.

Under the Ottomans the seat of provincial governance was built in the Ganja-Qarabagh vilayet (province) governed by a vali (governor).

Provinces were composed of sanjaks (district) ruled by a sarasgar. The sanjaks were split into smaller military-administrative units called mahal and nahiyas. There were also smaller areas like sanjakeks, naibs and katkhudas that were controlled by local feudal officials.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: The tribal Vainakh society was organized as clans (Teips or Taips) and the clans were incorporated into the larger feudal structure with a *èèla* (the prince) ruling over a number of vassals. There were feudal princedoms established like Simsim.

Within that society people were united in family groups called *Tsa* (house). The Teips were united by a tribal group of *Gars* (branch) and *Tsa*'s were part of these *Gars*. The Teips had their own council of elders, the *Mexk-kxel*, and the members of the Teips were democratically elected member of the *Tsa*. The unions of the Teips were called *Tukkhum* which supervised the clans with a Board of Participants called *Teipan-Khelli* and united the clans to fight outsiders.

Many Vainakh clans tended to be established either in the mountains or in the plains. Within Vainakh society, there were also free highland communities of independent peasants residing in the mountains.

Discussion/Questions

- 1- What factors prevented regions of the Caucasus from being influenced by the forms of government in nearby neighboring states, despite being influenced by their cultures? What made them conservative in this aspect?
- 2- How were the societies in the North Caucasus classified?

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MILITARY:

South Caucasus:

Georgia: Under the Seljuks, there was a regular army and peasant militia formed to stop their colonization. The Georgian Royal army also invited mercenaries from Germany, Italy, and as from Kievan Rus as well. King David IV established a regular army which included the *aznours* (the gentry) and 40,000 peasants, and created a royal guard detachment of 5000 horsemen. He implemented a major military reform in 1118–1120. He also invited 40,000 Kipchak mercenaries from the north Caucasian steppes to Kartli to join his army and to settle in Georgia with their families. He brought these mercenaries to use against the Seljuks, and David IV personally trained the army.

For the Georgian rulers, it was vital to gain the trust and to make alliance with the Northern Caucasus mountaineers who controlled the Caucasus passes and provided the Georgian army with auxiliary detachments.

In the 13th century, during Mongol rule, the Georgians were required to participate in the military expeditions of the khans. Each *tuman* had to provide 10,000 soldiers.

The Georgian *Spasalar* or *Amirspasalar* (commander-in-chief) were the highest officials in the Persian army and in the Kingdom of Georgia that lasted till the late 15th century.

In the 16th century, during Shah Abbas, the *ghulams* (slave military corps) were created which were composed of Circassians, Georgians, and Armenians. The Georgian *ghulams* (slave corps) held key military positions and prominent status at the royal Persian court.

Armenia:

The Armenian kings had a regular army and the military included the Royal Guard and the Armed Forces. These soldiers were raised and trained by *Nakharars* for royal orders and the *Zoranamak* (Military Register) kept the records of the list of all feudal landowners and determined the terms of their vassal military service. The size of the army was around 100,000. The commander-in-chief was referred to as *sparapet*.

The Armed Forces were divided into 4 divisions and they were commanded by *bdeshkh*. The Royal Guard was under the control of a military commander, a *maghkhaz*.

Azerbaijan:

The military aristocracy (emirs) and military commanders played an important role in the system of urban administration.

Under the Safavids, the regular army troops included: the *ghulams* (slave military corps), cavalry which consisted of Georgians, Armenians, Circassians and other North Caucasus nationalities to

reduce the influence of the Qizilbash aristocracy in Persian Azerbaijan), the musketeers-tufengchies, the artillery-gunners, feudal militia kurchies and militias of the provinces.

In the 16th-17th centuries, the army was composed of military forces commanded by the provincial beylerbey. The military forces included several thousand soldiers for each beylerbey.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: Like their society, the Vainakh army was also organized by clan. They used the guerrilla tactics that they were familiar with from fighting in mountains and forests.

During the Mongol invasion, they built strategically located military defense towers and fortification and developed a system of coordinated defense. Senior clan elders ran the clans and a military clan elder took over in time of war.

Discussion/Questions

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SOCIAL HISTORY

CLASS:

South Caucasus:

Georgia: In the 13th century, the Georgian nation was split into patroni (lord, master), and qma (vassal or serf).

The aristocrats or upper-class nobles were divided into two classes: Tavadi and Didebuli. Eristavi was another class name used for the prince and upper-class nobles till the 14th century. The lowest member of this class were called Aznauri.

Till the 18th century, Georgia had a traditional class structure, partly sharing the class structure of the Ottomans and the Persians. The country was ruled by kings, and below the king there were princes of various ranks and major and minor landed gentry.

Armenia: In the 2nd century CE, at the top of the social strata was the king. The state's ruling class was divided into major and minor feudal landlords. Major feudal landlordship was hereditary, while minor landlords gained their positions based on their service. The State Council included only major landlords. The nakharars (princely lords) were the real masters and they had their own armies. For example, the Bagratuni family was one of the nakharars. The nakharars governed by ter or nahapet. The second rank was the azats (ostaniks - knights) comprised of middle and minor nobility. At the lowest strata were the Ramiks and shinakans (peasants), and struks (slaves).

Azerbaijan:

In the 10th - 12th century, the leading class was composed of the king, who was both head of the army and ruler, clergymen, warriors, farmers and ordinary people. The peasants were divided into two groups: uluc and azad (free) peasants.

In the 15th century, the feudal leading class included the Sultan, military aristocracy-amirs and commanders of military garrison, meliks (local settled nobility), civil bureaucracy, and the clergy (theologians and lawmakers).

In the 16th and 17th century, at the top of the strata was the shah who had unlimited authority, then came military aristocrats, supreme Shia confessors, civil aristocrats and main local aristocrats. The main part of the urban population was composed of craftsmen and tradesmen. Big land-owners, merchants, clergy, and administrative officers had the highest status in the urban population.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: The social structure of the North Caucasian society was based on the clan or tribal system. The tribal bonds were very strong among the Vainakhs in determining their social and political relations. Within the Vainakh society, there was no aristocracy. They were composed of large families and clans and their members considered themselves free and equal to each other.

At the top of the feudal structure was the èèla (the prince) followed by the nobility, uzdens (vassals and clergymen), halkhoi (freemen), yalkhoi (servants), lesh (serfs), and finally yiisarsh (the slaves and war captives).

At the lowest level of the social structure, there was an extended family. These families shared common property and responsibilities. Closely related extended families formed a clan, and the unification of the clans formed the tribes.

Discussion/Questions

- 1- How could the tribes stick to tribal bonds and elect their leaders through a democratic system in the North Caucasus?
- 2- How did the people in the South Caucasus preserve their traditional class system despite numerous invasions and occupations?

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GENDER:

South Caucasus:

Georgia: Women played a significant role in medieval Georgia. For example, the Virgin Mother was considered the protector of Georgia and Saint Nina spread Christianity in Iberia. There were female rulers: Queen Tamar - the first ruler of Georgia, Rusudan (Queen Regnant) from the Bagratuni dynasty - ruled Georgia in the 13th century, and Ketevan of Kakheti ruled Georgia in the 16th century.

Georgia adopted chivalric attitudes towards women. Concepts such as the Earth (dedamitsa), mother language (deda ena), central pillar of house (dedabodzi), the Sun (mze) and capital (dedakalaki) all had female meanings.

Armenia: The equality between men and women was respected in Armenia as mentioned in the rules of *Ashtishat* from 4th century which allows women to administer the family property, and *Shahapivan* from 5th century which gives equal rights to both women and men to decide their marriage.

The women's rights were also mentioned in secular legal documents in the *King Vachagan's Codex* from the 5th century.

In medieval Armenia, although the society was patriarchal, women were highly respected. In the 12th century, the Armenian scholar Mkhitar Gosh's Law code (Datastanagirk) forbade violence against women and it contained severe penalties against anyone who violated it. It described the role of men and women in the family, equality between men and women and expressed the importance of women having an education, marriages managed by mutual consent, and of the recognition of women's honor, respect, and dignity. Armenian women were also allowed to have property, and to sell or buy lands without with their husbands' consent.

Azerbaijan: In medieval Azerbaijan, women played an important role in society. Besides household work, women took part in cultivating the land and even became warriors when needed. In the medieval miniatures, women were depicted armed and fighting on horseback. The medieval Azerbaijani epos *Kitabi-Dede Korkut* written in the 11th century mentioned women warriors like Burla khatun and Banuchichak. Mansati Ganjavi was the first female poet in Azerbaijan in the 12th century. Another poet, Nizami Ganjavi in his poem *Khosrov and Shirin* depicted the wife of the Sasanid king Khosrov II, Shirin as a brave women riding a horse.

North Caucasus: Medieval Chechen society's structure was firmly based on equality. The Chechen code of honor required moral and ethical behavior, generosity and protection of women' honor.

Discussion/Questions

1. What forms of gender roles and relations were assimilated by Muslim Chechens and Azerbaijanis?
- 2- How do Christian Georgians and Armenians describe and explain gender roles and practices in their society?

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INNOVATION:

Georgia:

Christianity: Kartli was converted to Christianity in the 4th century and Christianity became the state religion. Conversion of the country into Christianity was followed by the translation of the Old and New Testament into the Georgian language.

***Sitkvis kona*:** The Georgian scholar Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani created the first dictionary of the Georgian language, *Sitkvis kona* in the 17th century.

Chonguri: This musical instrument which dates back to the 12th century was a strummed bowl-lute chordophone like a panduri. Unlike the three-string Panduri, the Chonguri has 4 strings.

Irrigation system: In the 13th century, a complex irrigation network of 53,000 hectares of land was built in Samgori and the Alazani .

Alphabet: Based on the chronicles, the Georgian alphabet was created by King Parnavaz of Georgia in the 3rd century. The development of the Georgian script went through three major stages: Asomtavruli (Mrglovani) was the oldest script from the 5th century. Nuskhuri (Khutsuri) was used in the 9th century. The third alphabet, Mkhedruli dating back to the 10th century, is used currently.

Armenia:

Alphabet: The invention of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots in the 5th century under the Arshakuni dynasty marked the beginning of the Golden Age of Armenian culture and was a major metamorphosis in Armenian history. Armenian historian Movses Khorenatsi's book *History of Armenia* is the earliest known historiographical work written in Armenian alphabet.

Mesrop Mashtots also was the first to open schools in Armenia where education was conducted in the Armenian language. In the 11th century, the hamalsarans (universities) opened in Armenia.

There were many Armenian philosophers such as Paruyr Haykazn, Yeznik Koghbatsi and Davit Anhaght from the 5th century and Hovhannes Imastaser from the 11th century.

Christianity: Zoroastrian Armenians converted to Christianity in the 4th century, and they were the first Christian nation in the world. Christianity created the philosophical or ideological foundations for the centralized state and it strengthened the position of the monarchy by placing the king at the top of the sociopolitical strata. The Armenians were one of the first nations to translate the Bible into their own language, Armenian.

Khachkars (cross-stones): A medieval national form of art are the khachkars created in Armenia like those at Momik (14th century) and Kiram (16-17th centuries).

Azerbaijan:

Islam: In the 11th century, with the arrival of the Seljuks and Sunni Islam, the ethnic composition was changed in Azerbaijan. However, the conversion of Azerbaijan to Shia Islam happened under the Safavid Empire in the 16th century.

Mugham: Mugham belongs to the system of modal music and may have derived from the Persian musical tradition. In the 16th–17th centuries the art of mugham evolved from a folk genre to become a musical form played in the palace. In this period a dastgah (Persian musical modal system) form starts to develop in the structure and forms of mugham.



Nuzhe: This is an Azerbaijani stringed instrument. The nuzhe was made on the basis of the cheng and qanun (instrument). The nuzhe was invented by the prominent music expert Safi al-Din al-Urmawi in the 13th century.

Carpet Weaving: This art was originally developed in Guba, Shirvan, Ganja, Gazakh, Karabakh and around Baku. Carpet weaving dates back to the 2nd millennium BCE. Geometric designs, and pictures of vegetative patterns decorate Azerbaijani carpets.

North Caucasus

Chechnya:

Phandar: The phandar is an old traditional, three-string plucked musical instrument made of walnut wood with a stretched body, a flat top and a curved lower deck.



Carpet Weaving: The weaving of carpets dates back to ancient times.



The Istang was a thin felt carpets distinguished with their peculiar pattern. People hang the Istang horizontally on the walls of the guest-room and the master's chamber.

Chechen Alphabet: The first Cyrillic-based Chechen alphabet was created and introduced in Tbilisi in 1862 by the Chechen Qedi Dosov (Kedy Dosoyev) and Peter von (Karlovlch) Uslar.

First Chechen School: To increase literacy in Chechnya, the first ethnic Chechen school was opened in Grozny in the 1860s by Peter Karlovich Uslar. Uslar and Dosov compiled the first Chechen textbooks.

Vainakh tower: To avoid the threat of invasions by nomadic hordes, the Vainakhs built their first defense towers in the 13th – 14th centuries. This was a kind of multi-floor structure that was used for dwelling or defense (or sometimes both).



SCIENCE:

South Caucasus:

Georgia: There were Muslim scientists in Georgia who worked at the Maragha Observatory which was founded in the 13th century.

Fakhr al-Din al-Khilati: Khilati was a mathematician, philosopher and astronomer. He developed the Tusi couple for medieval planetary theory in 1247.

Abul Fazl Hubaysh Tiflisi: Hubaysh was an astronomer who had two works on astronomy written in Persian: *Introduction to the Study of the Stars* and *Description of the Stars*.

Abuserisdze Tbeli: Tbeli was a theologian and astronomer who worked at the Maragha Observatory, and also made important contribution to astronomy.

King Vakhtang VI of Kartli: King Vakhtang's book *The Book on Mixing Oils and Making Chemistry* made a considerable contribution to the field of chemistry in the 17th century.

Alexander Batonishvili: Alexander was the first commander of artillery in Georgia. He wrote the first study of artillery science which was used as a manual in the Georgian army.

Armenia: According to Armenian historians Movses Khorenatsi and Elishe, the Armenians made medical discoveries in the 7th century. The natural sciences successfully continued to develop in the next centuries.

Davit Anhaght: Anhaght was the first scientist of the Medieval Armenian non-religious philosophy and he was also a member of Neo-Platonic school in the 6th century. His major work was *The Definition of Philosophy*.

Mkhitar Heratsi: Heratsi was an Armenian physician who wrote the book *Relief of Fevers* in 1184, an encyclopedic study which included issues related to diet, surgery and psychotherapy.

Amirdovlat of Amasia: Amirdovlat was a physician who wrote books on medicine and science in the 15th century. He was the author of the books *The Lore of Medicine* (anatomy, pathology, hygiene) and *Akhrabadin* (pharmaceutics).

Anania Shirakatsi (Ananias of Shirak): Shirakatsi was a mathematician and the founder of astronomy in Armenia. In his *Knnikon* (Canon) he shows his fascination with the theoretical and practical questions of medicine in the 17th century.

Azerbaijan:

Seyid Yahya Bakuvi: Bakuvi was a scientist and philosopher who authored numerous works on philosophy, astronomy and math. His famous philosophic works were *Sharkh-l Gulshani-raz* (Comments to flower garden of secrets) and *Asrar at-Talibin* (Secrets of searchers of the truth).

Nakhchivani Najmaddin ibn Ahmad ibn Abubakr ibn Mohammad: Ibn Mohammad was a philosopher who worked in the Maragha observatory. He did researches on the problems of peripatetic philosophy, logic and nature.

Fazil Faridaddin Shirvani: The astronomer Shirvani dedicated his life to the study of heavenly bodies and gathered several grids of the celestial sky.

Nakhchivani Mohammad ibn Hindushah ibn Sanjar ibn Abdullah al-Girani an-Nakhchivani: Al Girani was a scientist who authored two works. The first was *Sihah al-fors*, completed in 1328, a dictionary of 2300 words and phrases in Farsi language. His second work was *Dastur al-katib fi tayin al-maratib* (The Instructions for the secretaries to determine the degrees) written in 1366. The book covered the entire range of social, legal and military topics that a high-level bureaucrat would need to know.

Discussion/Questions

- 1- What was the political benefit of the invention of the Armenian alphabet?
- 2- How did the Azerbaijanis benefit from the adoption of Arabic alphabet?

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ECONOMY

TRADE:

South Caucasus

Georgia: The Georgian economy, which was based on agriculture, improved with a sophisticated irrigation system and productivity was increased with the development of a large Georgian plough. A centralized government facilitated domestic and international trade.

Tbilisi became a commercial, domestic and international trade center which sat on the routes of the Silk Road that linked China, Central Asia, and the West. From Tbilisi, Georgian caravans carried raw silk, clothes, wine, fruits, vegetables, nuts (walnuts), furs and some herbs (madder) to Persia and the Ottomans. Kakhétian horses, called gurji, were also exported to Persia.

Armenia: In the 9th century, the independent Armenian principalities were united and a trade alliance was made with Byzantium. Ani became a commercial and trade center.

In the 11th century, Armenia exported a variety of manufactured goods and raw materials, including jewelry, silver, copper, iron, horses and mules, fish, fruit, wine, walnut wood, metalwork, glassware, ceramics, textiles and red dye.

In the early 13th century, Armenian merchants established transit trade with neighboring countries. Cilicia became the main trade center along the Silk Road conducting an active trade with Western European countries like Venice, Genoa and Marseille. Cilicia produced purebred horses, wool items, wines and exported them to the West. Caravans carrying Chinese silk, Indian spices, gems and gold jewelry, and Russian furs, transported these goods to Europe and to the Middle East. From the East, they imported silk, cotton, spices and precious stones for sale to Europe.

During the Mongol domination, domestic trade declined and international trade came to a halt, due to lost trade links with the Byzantine Empire.

In mid-15th century, the Ararat province became the new economic center with Yerevan being its new administrative center.

Azerbaijan: The city Barda, the capital of the Caucasian Albania since the 5th century, served as a major trading center on the Silk Road connecting the Middle East and Near Eastern countries with Europe. The merchants transported oil, wool, flax, cotton, minerals, salt, cotton, dyes and medicines to European countries.

The cities of Shirvan and Shamakha were the main sites for silk production. From Shirvan, the caravans transported oil, spice (salt), herbs (madder, saffron), raw silk and silk clothes, carpet and carpet items, ceramic, glass, copper and wood dishes, weapons, jewelry, fruits and vegetables to the other cities of Caucasus and Middle Eastern countries.

The cities of Shirvan, like Baylakan, produced candies and ceramic dishes, Baku provided oil and salt, Shamakha exported raw silk and silk clothes, also the river of Kur provided various kind of fish to export.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: Agriculture, cattle breeding, crafts and trade were the basis of their economy. They conducted their trade with North Caucasians, Georgia, Russia and eastern countries.

Long-distance foreign trade activities had also been a stable component of the Vainakh's local economy along a side artery of the Silk Road since the 8th century connecting the Northwestern Caucasus with Central Asia and India.

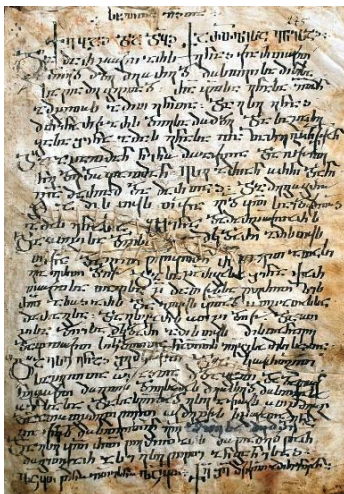
Carpet weaving and carpet products, cotton and flax were produced and transported in Derbend. With the Russian expansion, the Vainakhs' trade fell into the hands of the Russians.

Discussion/Questions

- 1- What role did Silk Road trade play in the cultural and economic development of the Caucasus?
- 2- What role did the peoples and states of the Caucasus play in the Silk Road trade?

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- 1- Coene, F., The Caucasus An Introduction, Routledge, 2010.
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CULTURAL HISTORY

VISUAL ARTS:

PAINTING:

South Caucasus:

Georgia: In the 9th – 10th centuries, monks like Ioane Zosime and Arsen Iqaltoeli began to reform the Georgian literary language and developed calligraphy.

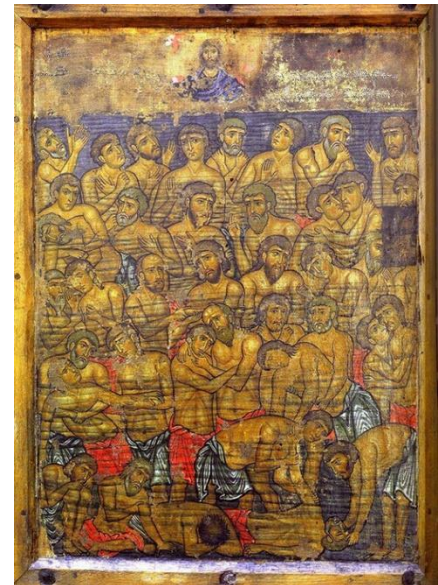
During the reign of Queen Tamar, Georgian art, especially illustrated manuscripts and miniature painting reached their peak. One of these manuscripts, the Vani Gospels, was an illustrated manuscript that belongs to the end of the 12th century and was composed at the request of Queen Tamar.

Icon Painting: Georgian icon painting appeared in the 10th century. The most ancient one was the Mother of God with the Child and St. Barbara.

Georgian art reached its peak towards the end of the 12th century when the Georgian state was independent and powerful. One example is the icon of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste.

The Khakhuli triptych was one of the largest enamel artworks created in Georgia depicting the Virgin Mary. It comprised 115 examples of Byzantine and Georgian cloisonné enamel brought from Constantinople and Georgia in the 8th - 12th centuries.

Three-dimensional painting with central perspective iconography developed in Georgia between 10th -13th century.



The Ksani valley Largvisi became a center for icon painting in the 14th century. Under the influence of Byzantine art, a number of icons were created there in the 14th - 15th centuries.

Mural Painting: The monastery Vardzia contained frescos dating from the 12th century, including a portrait of Queen Tamara.

The monastery David-Garedja exhibits the best quality mural paintings from the 17th century. This period also witnessed wide introduction of European art, especially icon painting in Georgia.

Armenia:

Miniature Painting: Armenian painting, mostly miniatures in religious manuscripts developed between the 9th and 17th centuries. These miniatures combined Western ideals with Eastern colors and themes.

Armenian miniature illustrative art gained its peak in the 10th and 14th centuries. Toros Rosslin and Sargis Pitsak were famous for their choice of colors and innovative solutions in iconography.



Stone Carving - Khachkars: In Armenia, Khachkars (cross-stones) were carved stones, a traditional monument that looked like a flat vertical stone with an image of a cross in the middle that represented the Tree of Life. Each khachkar has a unique character, and they can have different sizes.



Azerbaijan: In Azerbaijan decorative art dated back to the 8th-10th centuries.

Miniature Painting: In Azerbaijan, miniature paintings by Abdilmomin Mahammad al-Khoyi first appeared in the manuscript of *Varga and Gulsha* in the 13th century.

Maragha, Tabriz and other towns of Azerbaijan became centers for calligraphy and miniature painting.

One of the best miniatures of the 14th century is contained in the manuscript of the Great Tabriz Shahname (Demott Shahname).

A new style of miniature was introduced in the 15th century by the Tabriz school. The best illustrations of this style appeared in the poems *Khosrov and Shirin* and *Mehr and Mustary* by the artist Abd al-Hayy.



Miniature art reached its peak in the 16th century. Manuscripts by Shah and Darvish and Khamsa with their miniatures were the best illustrations of this period.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: The Vainakh people were masters of stone carving. A dominant motif in traditional art was plant ornaments, the crescent, sun and water waves.

ARCHITECTURE:

South Caucasus:



Georgia:

Cruciform style: With the acceptance of Christianity, the construction of churches gained rapid improvement, and gradually a unique cruciform style of church architecture developed, evident in the basilica-type churches of Bolnisi and Urbnisi (5th century) and the cruciform domed Jvari Church (6th century).

Cross-dome style: The Georgian cross-dome style of architecture became a characteristic feature of most medieval Georgian churches. One of the examples was the Gelati Monastery. The Bagrati Cathedral in Kutaisi, the Ikalto Monastery complex and Academy, and the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta also belong to this style of architecture.



In the 13th century, Georgian architecture reached a new level and is well represented in the Gelati Cathedral, the domed church at Tighva, the churches of Ikolta and Betania, and the rock-carved monastic complexes of David Gareja and Vardzia.

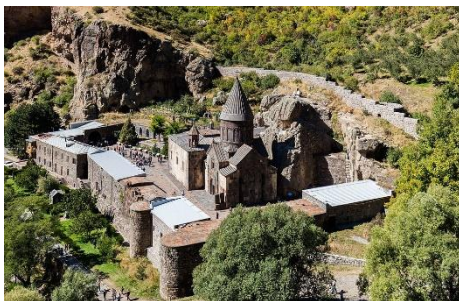
Armenia:

Basilicas: After the adoption to Christianity, the first Armenian churches were built between the 4th and 7th century. The early churches were mostly basilicas, arched structures with supporting columns. The construction of one of the best examples of early Christian architecture, the *Echmiadzin Cathedral* (Cathedral of the Only Begotten) belongs to the 4th century. It was built on the spot of a pre-Christian temple in Vagharshapat (Echmiadzin).

Cupola Cone: By the 5th century the typical cupola cone in the center had become widely used.

Hripsime style - dome structures: By the 7th century, centrally-planned Hripsime style churches were being built with niched buttress. The church of St. Hripsime has remained active throughout the centuries, and up to the present.

One of the best example of central dome structures was the *Temple of Zvartsnots* built in the mid-7th century with a three-story pyramidal structure set on strong circular columns.



Between the 9th and the 14th centuries, Armenian architecture reached its zenith. *The Monastery of Geghard*, the *Temple of Surb Khach* on Akhtamar Island built by the architect Manuel and the *Church of Noravank* built by Momik are all examples of this revival period. Haghpat and Haritchavank were built in this period. *The Monastery of Geghard* was partially carved in adjacent solid rock and the rest of the structure blends in with the surrounding landscape. Momik's church of Noravank was richly decorated with images of Our Lord and the angels, and this was a new style in Armenian architecture.

After the invasions of Armenia by the Timurids and the destruction of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia by the Mamluks at the end of the 14th century, architectural activity halted for nearly 250 years, and there were no new structures built until the 17th century.

The 17th century was another revival period under the rule of the Safavids. The churches at Mughni and Shoghakat at Etchmiadzin are churches built in this period.



Azerbaijan:

Dome Building: After the adoption of Christianity by the Caucasus Albanians, till the 7th century, basilicas replaced the pagan structures. The best examples of this period are the basilica in the village of Qum, a complex of temples in Minghachavir, Kilisadagh in the Gabala district, Mamrukh in the Azqatala district, and Lekit in the Qakh district which reflect the high level of culture of that period.

With the arrival of Islam, the formation of architecture received a new style reflecting the new religion as in the Juma Mosque built in the village Sundu of Shamakhi in the 8th century.



In the 9th – 10th century, one of the distinguished examples of architecture built on the banks of the river Agoglan, in Azerbaijan was the monastery Amaras.



natural oil well in Baku.

Nakhchivan School - Tower Building: The use of towers with several identical sides was an important characteristic of the Nakhchivan School's architecture. The prominent figure of tower building in Azerbaijan was Ajami Abubakr oglu Nakhchivani. He was also the founder of the Nakhchivan School of Architecture in the 12th century. He built the Usif Kuseyir Oglu tomb (locals called it the Atababa dome) and the Momina Khatun tomb.

In the 12th century, a cylindrical eight story, 28 meter structure Maiden Tower was built by architect Massoud the son of Davud alongside a



Shirvan School: The Palace of the Shirvanshahs built in the 15th century by the Shirvanshah dynasty is the best example of Shirvan architecture. The Shirvan School was famous for the type of stone used, asymmetry and the carving style of the architects in the main building.



North Caucasus:

Chechnya: From the 12th century, the temple Tkhabyerdy was the most significant Christian monument in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

Also, Alby-Yerdy and Targhim were churches constructed in Ingushetia and on the territory adjacent to Chechnya in the same period.



Vainakh tower: The Vainakh tower that was used for dwelling or defense in the Middle Ages was a kind of multi-floor structure assembled from large stones. These architectural techniques reached their peak in the 15th – 17th centuries.



In this period, numerous defense towers were built to defend the population from the raids of hostile communities. These constructions were built in Doshkhakle, Orsoi, Kart and Tsecha-Akhk and mostly in the valley of the River Argun (ancient tower complexes -Vaserkelovsky complex, Tazbichi, Ikolchi, Upper Cockatoo, Meshi, Motsar, Nicara, Ushkaloi).

SCULPTURE:

South Caucasus

Georgia: Under the influence of Hellenistic and Persian sculpture, relief sculpture was developed, and the earliest examples of reliefs are located in the basilica *Bolnisi Sioni* in the 5th century, carved in the interior of the church. The relief depicts zoomorphic shapes with geometric and vegetal patterns. Stone crosses in medallions are featured throughout the reliefs that cover the facades of the church. The stone crosses, dating back to the 6th- 7th century, are surrounded with carved images.



The reliefs adorning the church of *Jvari* in Mtskheta are another example from this period. On facades of the church, there are carved images of the local governors *eristavi* of Kartli and commissioners.

The 8th - 9th centuries are regarded as a transitional period with new forms of expression in Georgian sculpture. Some of the best examples of this period were *Ashot Kourapalates* in the Opiza Monastery and *David III of Tao* from the Oshki Monastery.

The 10th century was a period of development of new tendencies in reliefs as witnessed in the figure of *Ashot Kukhi*, the *Commissioner of Tbeti Cathedral*. Georgian artists sought to emphasize the figures by making them stand out from the surface.

At the beginning of the 11th century, the reliefs on church facades with their sophisticated forms exhibited a high level of artistry and technique. One of the best examples of reliefs from this period are found in the *Nikortsminda Cathedral*, the *Cathedral Svetitskhoveli* and the *Cathedral Samtavisi*.



In the 12th century, there was a tendency to shift from carved figures to geometric and vegetal ornamentations as in the *Church of Pitareti* and the *Church of St. Saba* in Sapara.

Political and economic developments halted the development of sculpture till the 17th century. The 17th century witnessed a revival of stone carving with eclectic elements as found in the *Ananuri Church of the Dormition* and *Sagarejo church of the Holy Apostles St.*

Peter and Paul.

Armenia: In Armenia, the temple of Garni built in the Ionic order of Hellenistic temple architecture from the first century displays geometric and floral reliefs.



In the 6th and 7th centuries, Armenian churches had carved figures around the windows and in the space above the doorways as witnessed in the Cathedrals Zvartnots, Odzun, Ptghni and Mren. In the Cathedral Zvartnots, there were four supporting pillars with carved gigantic heraldic eagles wrapping around the sides.



In the 10th century, the *Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar* displayed the most sophisticated carvings covering the entire façade. Other monasteries like Tatev, Geghart, Hovhannavank, Haghpats, Sanahin and Tsakhatskar also had similar stone carvings.



Obelisks: Rectangular rock obelisks with figures of saints are found outside of the Church of Odzun from the 8th century.

Carved Stelae (Stone monuments): There is also a large body of upright stone monuments in the form of four-sided stelae from the 5th to 7th centuries. The stelae depicting saints were placed on the grounds of churches as the ones at Talin.

Khachkars: Khachkars (cross-stones) were carved stones looked like a flat vertical stone with an image of a cross in the middle that represented the Tree of Life. Each khachkar has a unique character, and they can have different sizes. Some small khachkars were inserted into the walls of churches as in Hovhannavank. They were mostly used as gravestones or as memorials.

Azerbaijan:



Stone carved sculpture was widely used in Caucasian Albania. The Minghachevir Church Complex had four temples built in the 4th and 7th centuries. Stone carvings depicting people, animals, and mythical animals are also found in the Shirvanshahs' monument *Sabayil Castle* built in the 13th century in Baku Bay.

North Caucasus

Chechnya: In the 12th century temple *Tkhaba-Erdyi*, on both sides there are two standing figures. One of them is in the garments of a priest and has two bunches of grapes on his shoulders. The other figure holds a cross and a sword. In the upper part, next to the model of the church is carved a hand with a construction angle bar.

PERFORMING ARTS:

DANCE:

South Caucasus

Georgia: Dance in Georgia was a parallel development with agriculture and animal husbandry. The Kakhetian dance *Tsangala da Gogona* included features of agriculture such as sowing and watering.

Samaia: The folk dance *Samaia* was an old pagan dance. It was performed by three women who represented Queen Tamar of Georgia and her glory.

Armenia: In the 5th century Movsés Xorenats'i himself mentioned that the old descendants of Aram (Armenians) talk about the lyre, their songs and dances in their ballads.

In his *Parallel Lives*, the Greek historian Plutarch also mentioned Armenian traditional dances.

Shalakho: The dance *Shalakho* performed by two men in order to gain the affection of a woman was one of the oldest dances in Armenia.

Yarkhushta: Known from the early Middle Ages, the *Yarkhushta* was a warrior dance performed only by men in the Sassoun province of Western Armenia. In medieval times, before a battle the army used to perform this dance that looked like a fight between two warriors.

Azerbaijan:

Asma Kasma was one of the oldest wedding dances accompanied by a song called *Asma Kasma*. It was a dance with some dance features and few jumps.

Abayi was a dance of the middle ages from the Shaki and Zaqatala regions in Azerbaijan. This dance was performed by a group of people making exaggerated movements, and was accompanied by music.

The national dance *Kochari*, was a type of Yalli (halay), which had a rhythm, accompanied by a balaban (duruk) and nagara (a type of drum).

North Caucasus

Chechnya: The most important characteristic feature of Chechen dance was collectiveness. The main themes of the dances were usually love, freedom and pride. In traditional dances, both men and women performed together.

One of the traditional medieval Vainakh dances was the *Bakkhiychu nekhan khelkhar* (Dance of the Elderly), better known as lezginka performed by middle-aged people. Each village had its own version like Atagi, Gudermes, Shali.

Other traditional dances were the *Nokhchi dance*, *Dance of the Daggers* and *Dance of the Dzhigit* performed by men.

MUSIC:

South Caucasus

Georgia: Georgian folk music was mostly choral and polyphonic chanting. Polyphonic singing in Georgian music dates back to the introduction of Christianity at the beginning of the 4th century.

Georgian hymnography: In the 10th century, the monks like Ioane-Zosime developed Georgian hymnography.

Armenia:

Psalms: With the adoption of Christianity, monks began to write psalms (religious songs) and sermons. The first psalms were written by the monk Mesrop Mashtots and the patriarch Sahak Partev. The Priest Komitas, composer Stepanos Syunetsi and Hovhan Odzetsi further developed psalms during 7th and 8th centuries.

The psalms produced by Grigor Magistros, Petros Getadardz, Hovhannes Sarkavag, Hovhannes Erznkatsi and Nerses Shnorhali between the 11th and 12th centuries, are considered the masterpieces of this genre.

Sharakans (Chants): In the 7th century, Barsegh Chon, Anania Shirakaci and Komitas Aghtstsi were the first writers of a collection of sharakans called *Chonyntir sharaknots*. Armenian music reached its level of highest development between the 10th and 14th centuries. Mesrop Mashtots and his students wrote Sharakans sung in masses, and in the 12th century *Sharakans* were composed by the hymn composer Nerses Shnorhali.

New Musical Notation - Khazes: An Armenian special system of music notation was developed called *Khazes* (Haza) by Stephanos Syunetsi in the 8th century.

Gusans: *Gusans* were the travelling bards performing music and singing epical songs.

Azerbaijan:

New Musical Notation: A new system of musical notation found in the *Treatise on Music* was created by Sefieddin Urmavi in the 13th century.

Mugham: *Mugham* was developed based on the traditional Persian musical modal system *dastgah*. In the 15th century, the singers of the *Mugham* sang the *gazals* (odes) of Fuzuli, Habibi and Khata.

North Caucasus

Chechnya: One of the most important features of Vainakh folk music was polyphonic singing which could be performed in both religious and secular songs. Usually, the songs were performed without musical instruments.



Dechig-pandur: Some of the songs were accompanied by an instrument called a *dechig-pandur*, a three-string plucked instrument.

Phandar: A three-string plucked musical instrument, the phandar was similar to the panduri, used in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

Illi: In the 13th century, the songs performed by bards included heroic ballads, *Illi* (or *illancha*), which were performed by male singers and depicted the struggle for freedom.

Yish: *Yishs* were comic, romantic, melancholic and love ballads sung by women. The lyrics were written by the singers themselves.

Nazmanash: The religious *nazmanash* (hymns) were performed by both male and female singers.

THEATER:

South Caucasus

Georgia: Georgian culture has been under the influence of both the Christian and Muslim (Sufi) religions since the 12th century. The king Teimuraz I gave Georgian poetry new direction with his translations of verses from Persian literature. He also germinated Georgian theater with his verse dialogues used by masked actors to entertain the Russian envoys in Kutaisi.

Giorgi Avalishvili, a diplomat, writer and dramatist, was the forefather of the first Georgian National Theater founded in Tiflis in 1791. He was also the writer of the first Georgian drama called *King Teimuraz*.

Armenia: In Armenia the great advances in theater were made in the 5th century. Even though from the 7th century to the 9th century these advances were slowed down by the Arab invasion, the theater was able to survive.

The 11th and the 14th centuries marked the recovery period of the Armenian theater. Different types of dramas (tragic, erotic, love, mime, comic, epic) began to be performed in the Armenian Cilicia area.

In the 18th century, the secular dramas from Europe were translated into the Classical Armenian language. These plays were not performed frequently at theaters, but mostly used at schools in teaching Classical Armenian. Plays were written by the *The Mekhitarists* clergy who contributed to the development of the Western Armenian Theater and performed by the students.

Azerbaijan:

In the Middle Ages, religious dramas like *Shabih* spectacles that were performed in the month of Muharram were the most common theatrical performances. In the 16th century, under the rule

of the Safavids, *Shabih* was widely used. Folk performances played a great role in the development of the professional theater of Azerbaijan. Besides *Shabih*, the artists performed *godu-godu*, *kavsaj*, *yel baba*, *gudul*, *yugh*, *lal oyunu*, *garavelli*, *laghlaghi* in open spaces. The performances in open spaces continued until the second half of the 19th century.

North Caucasus

Chechnya: The earliest written accounts of Chechen dancing belong to 18th century European travelers.

The main sources of the medieval Chechen theater were the ancient pagan rituals and folk culture. For example, worshippers prayed the Mother of Cold, who symbolized evil, not to bring bad frost and not to destroy their livestock. After children ate treats presented on an oak branch, fire was placed on a log that had been kept from the old year. An adult would pray to the embodiment of good, the Father of Winter. Afterwards, embers from this sacred fire were taken home by the worshippers.

In the 16th century, these rituals turned into humorous theatrical acts. One of the best examples of this ritual is *Belkhi*, a collective effort to help a resident to build a house or to help him in harvesting his crops. This ritual was accompanied by music, singing, dancing and jokes. Boys and girls performed comic plays with a dialogue sung by a male solo and choir on the one side, and a female solo and choir on the other side.

Discussion / Questions:

- 1- What type of cultural influence did the Persians and the Ottomans have on the South Caucasus?
- 2- How were the inhabitants of the North Caucasus able to preserve their culture under strong influence of Russia?

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RELIGION

South Caucasus:

Georgia: Persian Zoroastrianism (Mazdaism) and Georgian Paganism were the official religion in Kartli when Christianity appeared in Georgia. By the early 4th century, Christianity was proclaimed as the state religion of Iberia (eastern Georgia). In the 4th century, first the Queen of Iberia and then King Mirian were converted to Christianity by St. Nino. With the adoption of Christianity, the Georgian alphabet was invented and the Bible was translated into Georgian in the 5th century. All of Western Georgia became Christian in the 5th century. Abkhazia and Lazica were Christianized in the 6th century.

By the 7th century, the Georgian and Armenian churches split and followed different church doctrines. Also, the Islam introduced by the Arabs affected Georgian cultural and political life for the next 1,300 years. Georgia became an autonomous vassal state of the Arab caliphate in the second half of the 7th century.

In the same century, the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church (founded in the 1st century) was administered by two ecclesiastical units under the jurisdiction of Constantinople: the Metropoly of Phasis and the Archdiocese of Sebastopolis, and the liturgy was conducted in Greek. It was in the 8th and 9th centuries that the language of the liturgy became Georgian.

Armenia: Christianity arrived in Armenia in the 1st century. Trdat the Great declared Christianity as the official religion of Armenia and founded the Armenian Apostolic Church in 301.

At the beginning, the liturgy in the Armenian Church was conducted in Greek and Syriac. There was a need to create an alphabet to understand church practices and the Armenian alphabet was created in 405 by Mesrop Mashtots.

In the middle of the 5th century, the Sassanians, having perceived the acceptance of Christianity to be a direct threat to their domestic and geopolitical interests, forced the Armenians to convert to Zoroastrianism. The Sassanians' relations with Armenia deteriorated and they began to conduct campaigns to destroy the Armenian church. They appointed a *marzpan* (governor) to Armenia in 428, introduced new taxes, terminated the tax-free status of the church and appointed a *mogpet* (Zoroastrian religious leader) to the supreme court. Pro-Byzantine nakharars and the church leaders organized riots against the Sassanians and also requested military

assistance from the Byzantine Emperor, but they received no support. After that, the Armenian Apostolic Church was separated from the Byzantine Orthodox Church and became fully independent.

The Arabs implemented a tolerant policy towards the Armenian Christians. With the creation of vassal principalities in 862, Armenia began to enjoy administrative and ecclesiastical autonomy.

Under the Mongols, the Armenian church enjoyed a privileged status. However, with the conversion of the Mongol elite to Islam in the late 13th century, the Armenian Church and the Christian faith came under attack.



The Karakoyunlu rulers were tolerant towards the Armenians and the ruler Jihanshah allowed the See of the Armenian Apostolic Catholicos to be moved from Cilicia to Yerevan in 1441.

Azerbaijan:

Christianity: In 4th century, *Christianity* was expanding at a fast rate in the western and the northern parts of Caucasian Albania. The autocephalic Albanian Church was founded in the 6th century and continued to exist till 1836.

Zoroastrianism

In Caucasian Albania *Zoroastrianism* exerted strong influence over the region. Some of the population refused to convert to Christianity and continued to practice *Zoroastrianism*, although some of them adopted Christianity.



To increase its influence in the region, the Russian Empire abolished the independent Albanian Church and united the Albanian Patriarchate with the Armenian Church.

Islam: *Islam* was introduced in Azerbaijan during the conquest of the Arabs in the 7th century. With the arrival of the Seljuks in the 11th century, Sunni Islam began to spread its influence in Azerbaijan, especially in Mughan, Mil, and in the territory of the Caspian Sea.

During the Mongol invasion, between the 13th and the 15th centuries, *Sufism* began to spread its influence in the region. However, in the 16th century, the Safavid Dynasty took power in Persia and declared Shia Islam as their state religion. When they established their control over Azerbaijan, Shia Islam began to exert its influence in the region. The majority of the population converted to Shia Islam in Azerbaijan, while a portion of the population remained Sunni.

Hurufism: A new sect of Sufism, *Hurufism* appeared in the late 14th-early 15th centuries in Azerbaijan. Hurufis claimed that the Koran should be interpreted via a system of letters, and the number 7 was considered sacred.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: The pre-Islamic Vainakh had an eclectic religion and believed in a plethora of deities. They adapted many religious beliefs from animism, totemism, paganism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam.

Zoroastrianism: The Vainakhs practiced pagan customs till the 16th century. Later, under Persian influence, Zoroastrianism dominated the region.

Christianity: By the 6th century some Chechens had converted to Christianity under the influence of Georgian Orthodox missionaries who were trying to spread Christianity among the Nakh peoples. They were able to convert some highland teips, and Christian influence reached its peak in the 12th century. However, after the Mongol conquest of Georgia, these proselytizing efforts to Christianize the highland teips ended because the Vainakh people lost their contact with the Georgians. As a result they went back to their old pagan practices and customs (lamkerst). The Bats (Tushetians – Vainakh people) were the only people who adopted Christianity in the 16th century.

Islam: The Mongol invasion ended Christian influence in the region, and they began to spread Islam in the North Caucasus in the 13th century. Islam began to spread to Chechnya from Daghestan in the 17th century. The Chechens followed the Shafii School of Sunni Islam. However, their religion carried vestiges of their ancient customs and the traditions of Zoroastrianism, Sunni practices, Sufi and Christian rituals.

Discussion/Questions

- 1-What type of impact did the conquest of the Mongols have on the society, religion and political system in the Caucasus?
- 2- How did the Persian domination impact on the religions of the Caucasus?

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PHILOSOPHY

South Caucasus

Georgia:

Peter the Iberian: Prince Peter the Iberian was a philosopher and the one of the founders of *Christian Neoplatonism* in the 5th century.

Ioane Petritsi: Petritsi was another the *Neoplatonist* philosophers in the 11th century. He was famous for his translations of Aristotle, Proclus, Nemesius, Ammonius Hermiae, and many other philosophical works.

Euthymius the Athonite: Athonite was was a monk and a philosopher from the 11th century. He made translations of many religious treatises and philosophical works like the translation of *Wisdom of Balahvari*. He also translated philosophical, religious and legal texts from Greek to Georgian.

Arsen Iqaltoeli: Iqaltoeli was a churchman and a philosopher from the 12th century. He translated from Greek major doctrinal and polemical works and published them in his book *A Book of Teachings* (Dogmatikon). He was under the influence of Aristotelianism.

Ephrem Mtsire: Mtsire was a Georgian monk who served in Antioch. He was also a theologian and a philosopher from the 12th century translating the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Basil of Caesarea, Ephrem the Syrian, and John of Damascus. He was the author of the *Tale on the Reason for the Conversion of the Georgians*.

Armenia:

David the Invincible: David was a Neoplatonist philosopher from the 6th century. He wrote his works in Greek, but they have survived only in Armenian translations. He wrote introductory handbooks to teach beginners. His translations were the best examples of the Hellenistic tradition in Armenian literature of the 6th to 8th centuries.

Hovnan Mayravanetsi: Mayravanetsi was an theologian and philosopher addressing the issues of social justice under Christian teaching, and was the follower of Miaphysitism.

Hovhannes Imastaser: Imaster was a philosopher and theologian. Imastaser standardized the Armenian prayer book and Psalter.

Gregory of Tatevatsi: Tatevatsi was a philosopher and theologian from the 15th century. He was a follower of Miaphysitism. His writings were against uniting the Armenian church with Rome. In 1397, he wrote the *Book of Questions*, a basic and comprehensive theological outline.

Azerbaijan:

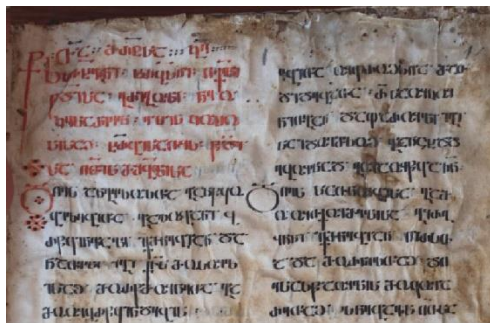
Seyid Yahya Bakuvi: Bakuvi was a scientist and a philosopher from the 15th century. He was the author of philosophic treatises like *Comments to the Flower Garden of Secrets* (Sharkh-I Gulshani-raz), *Secrets of Searchers of the Truth* (Asrar at-Talibin).

LITERATURE

South Caucasus

Georgia: The earliest Georgian hagiographic literary text was *Martyrdom of St. Shushanik* (Shushanikis tsameba) written by Jacob Tsurtaveli from the 5th century. The text carried features of the pre-Christian writing tradition.

Translations: Georgian literature began to develop after the spread of Christianity. It was heavily influenced by Byzantine, Persian and Arab culture. After the conversion to Christianity, Georgian writers began to translate both religious and secular works from Greek, Arabic, Persian, Armenian and Syriac. Monasteries became major centers in the development of the early literary works and played an important role in the further development of the Georgian literary tradition. After the invention of the Georgian alphabet, the Gospels were among the first works translated into Georgian from ancient Armenian.



Hagiographic Literature: *The Life of Saint Nino* (a life of a Greek woman who ministered to the Georgians to convert them to Christianity) and the *Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik* are the earliest attested Georgian hagiographic literature from the 5th century.

into Georgian.

In the 10th–11th centuries, the Georgian chronicler Leonti Mroveli and a monk and theologian Eprem Mtsire translated numerous works of hagiographic literature

Homiletic Works: Homiletic-hagiographic works were collected in the *Mravaltavi* (Book of Multiple texts). Another homiletic work was the two sermons of *Saint Sophron of Jerusalem* translated by Eprem Mtsire in the 9th century.

Chronicles: Two early works, *Moktsevai Kartlisai* and *Kartlis Tskhovreba* contain various historical sources.

The anonymous *Passion of Evstati of Mtskheta* is a document from the second half of the 6th century that explains Christian doctrine. In the 10th century, a series of stories titled *Georgia's*

Appeal provided new information for the adoption of Christianity by claiming that the origins of Christianity in Georgia could be associated with a young native woman named Nino.

Biographical Works: In Georgia, the most popular genre of historical writing became the biography. The first original work was the *Life of St. Shushanik* written in the 5th century.

The works that originated in the monasteries in southwestern Georgia were about the career and personality of a religious leader, St. Gregory of Khandzta from the 9th century.

Hymnographical Works: There were many hymnographical works written towards the end of the 10th century. A comprehensive hymnographic collection belongs to Mikel Modrekili. King David IV Aghmashenebeli wrote *Hymns of Repentance* in 1120 depicting his humility and zeal.

Secular literature: The first secular literature was Mose Khoneli's *Amiran-Darejaniani* from the 12th century.

Odes: Iovane Shavteli's *Abdulmesia* and Grigol Chakhrukhadze's *Tamariani* were odes praising the Christian virtues of King David the Builder and Queen Tamar.

Epic Poems: *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* written by Shota Rustaveli in the 12th century is considered the best Georgian national poem of the Golden Age during Queen Tamar's reign. It was about the adventures of three heroes who defend their country and queen.

During the Mongol invasions in the 13th century, Georgian cultural life began to decline. Literary efforts in this period were limited to copying old manuscripts. Then, with the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, Georgia was separated from Christian Europe.

The 15th and the 18th centuries witnessed the continuation of the influence of Persian literature. For example, Serapion Sabashvili-Kedelauri's *Rostomiani* was a copy of the Persian epic the *Shahname*. King Archil's *Visramiani* was a direct translation of an old Persian *Vīs and Rāmīn* written by Fakhrudin As'ad Gurgani. However, this was also the period that marked the beginning of a period of revival in Georgian literature with King Archil's great contributions *The Lay of Archil* and *The Dialog between Teimuraz and Rustveli*.

In 1625 King Teimuraz I wrote his original poem *The Book and Passion of Queen Ketevan* about his mother's martyrdom, soon after her death.

Armenia: After Mesrop Mashtots created the Armenian alphabet in the 5th century, Armenian culture and literature began to flourish. Mashtots himself was one of the first Armenian poets. The *Sharakans* (chants) were considered first as poetry chanted during religious services by the Armenian monks.

Translations: The translation of the Holy Scriptures from Syriac into Armenian in the 5th century is considered the first written literature. Between the 5th and 13th centuries historical works from Greek like *Eusebius of Caesarea*, *Socrates*, *Platon*, *Aristotle* and the *Jewish War of Josephus* were translated into Armenian. With such translations, the national literary language was enriched.

Oral literature: The Armenian epic poem *Sassountsi Davit* from the 8th century passed from generation to generation through oral tradition. It depicted a hero and his long-lasting struggle against the Arab conquerors and liberation from them.

Spiritual literature: In 10th century, the Armenian monk, theologian and poet Krikor Naregatsi in his study titled *The Book of Lamentations* combined sacred images with his personal feelings, judgements and true confessions.

Poetry: In the 11th century, the rise of Armenian poetry was attributed to the works of the poet Krikor Naregatsi. Krikor authored hymns, chants, panegyrics and homilies. Nerses Shnorhali also made important contributions to the development of Armenian poetry. He wrote epic poems and songs in Armenian, and was the founder of the Cilician school of poetry.

The poet Nahapet Kuchak, an *ashough* (minstrel) who lived in the 16th century, was known for his *hairens* (quatrains with 15 syllables) depicted his homeland, exile, love and desires.

Fables: Vardan Aygektsi and Mkhitar Gosh were intellectuals famous for their numerous fables which reflected their real world. Aygektsi's fable collection, the *Book of the Fox* (*Aghvesagirq*) was first published in Amsterdam in 1668.

Prose: The fictional prose of Mkhitar Gosh acquired a distinctive character. His 190 parables reflect the 12th century socio-political situation of Armenia, which had achieved independence. The figurative heroes of the parables are diverse: celestial bodies, various species of flora, animals, and humans. They contain numerous domestic and historical conversations, and exhilarating stories reflecting everyday life in which human relationships are being created.

Verse: In the 13th and the 16th centuries, the dimension of verse increased. These works touch upon the themes of love, nature, social life, alienation and moral education. They express the hardships of the people and individuals, patriotic moods and touch on philosophical issues of social status, life, death, the soul, and the body.

In the poetry of phased opposition to the development of secular ideas, doctrinal trends are secondary. Even after the 14th century, there were still inventions in which, opposed to the principles of Christian doctrine, human preference is given to material aspirations. Anthems dedicated to the Apostles, Christians, national saints and shrines reflect more mundane than religious phenomena.

In the 15th century, Armenian poets like Mkrtych Naghash began to use more secular themes such as love, grief, nature, and his journeys. Another famous poet who wrote about love, compassion, and philosophy of life was Nahapet Kuchak. The poet Grigoris Akhtamartsi depicted the suffering of his people and the foreign invasion of his country.

Naghash Hovnatan was one of the best known representative of secular poetry in the 17th century. Hovnatan also wrote numerous satirical and romantic songs and odes.

Azerbaijan: Caucasian Albanian written literature is attested in the form of epigraphic manuscripts dating back to the 5th century.

Poetry: In the 7th century, the Caucasian Albanian poet Devdek wrote an elegy on the death of Javanshir.

The anonymous epic poetry in the *Book of Dede Qorqud* that consists of twelve stories depicting the struggle of the Oghuz Turks with Pechenegs and Kipchaks for independence, was originally written in 11th century.

During the period of the Seljuks, with Nizami Ganjavi's *Treasure of Secrets* (the Khamsa), *Khosrov and Shirin*, *Leyli and Mejnun*, *Yeddi gezal* (Seven Beauties) and *Iskendername*, Azerbaijani literature reached its peak and the literature entered a Renaissance period.

Nasreddin Tusi, Maragali Ovhadi and Arif Ardabili followed the traditions of Nizami. Nasreddin Tusi, wrote a moral-didactic work called *Ahlaki-Nasiri*. Maragali Ovhadi's epic poems *Jami-Jem* and *Dehname* made an important contribution to Azerbaijan epic poetry. His *Fahhadnameh* was written under the influence of Nizami in 1369.

Izzeddin Hasanoglu wrote many poems in Azerbaijani and Persian, and he was well-known with his *divan* and *ghazals*.

Hurufism: In the 14th century a religious-political movement, a protest against radical religious dogmas called Hurufism existed in Azerbaijan. The founder of Hurufism, Fazlallah Naimi was a poet who wrote on the theories of Hurufism in his *Divan*, *Javidan-namah*, *Mahabbat-namah*, *Arsh-namah* and *Nawm-namah*. The other representative of Hurufism was the poet and thinker Imadeddin Nasimi who founded Turkic classical *arūḍ* poetry. Nasimi was also the first lyricist who wrote *ghazals* (philosophical poems) in Azerbaijani.

Imadaddin Nasimi was also one of the Hurufi mystical poets of the late 14th and early 15th centuries and he authored a *Divan* and *Ghazals*. The poets Fuzuli and Shah Ismail Khatai followed Nasimi and further developed his tradition.

In the 16th century, Shah Ismail Khatai wrote his *Divan*, *Dahnamah* (Ten Epistles) and didactic epic *Nesihatname* in Azerbaijani by using motifs from traditional Azerbaijani folk poetry.

The same century witnessed an epic book *Dede Qorqud* which consists of twelve stories reflecting the oral tradition of the Oghuz nomads.

The poet and thinker Mahammad Fuzuli played a very important role in the development of Azerbaijani literary language with his romance *Leyli and Mejnun* in the 16th century. Fuzuli's prose *Shikayetname* was another influential work.

The folk epics *Ashiq Garib*, *Abbas and Gulgaz*, *Asli and Kerem*, and *Koroghlu* were the folk poetries of the 17th century.

North Caucasus

Chechnya: With the adoption of Islam, the Arabic alphabet became the first Chechen literary script towards the end of the 17th century and it was used as the literary, scientific and business language. Chechen literature flourished under the influence of translations of theological sources of Sufi belief, ethical treatises poetry, and love songs from Turkish, Persian and Arabic between the 17th and 18th centuries. The Chechen population, residing in mountainous areas on the border of Georgia, used the Georgian alphabet between the 8th -19th centuries.

Teptars (Family Chronicles): A majority of *Teptars* were thoroughly revised in the 17th century, after the Chechens had adopted Islam and Arabic writing.

Illi (epic songs): The *Illies* continued their existence in the medieval period. Their composition was about the struggle for equality against the oppression of the local rulers.

Nart Sagas (folk epic): The Nakh legends included a group called the *Nart-Orxustxoi* and these legends described the Narts as aggressive brigands, who fought against popular heroes.

Questions:

1- What motivated medieval writers to compose histories and biographies?

Readings:

1- Roudik, Peter L. *Culture and Customs of the Caucasus*, Greenwood, 2008.

2- Historical Dictionary of Georgia, The Scarecrow Press Inc., 2007.

3- Khachikyan, A., *History of Armenia*, Edit Print, Armenia, 2010.

4- Leeming, E.L., "Creating an Orthodox Past: Georgian Hagiography and the Construction of a Denominational Identity", *Medieval Worlds*, No. 10, 2019, pp. 61-71

5- <https://rustaveli.tripod.com/aboutme.html>

6- <https://azerbaijan.az/en/information/510>