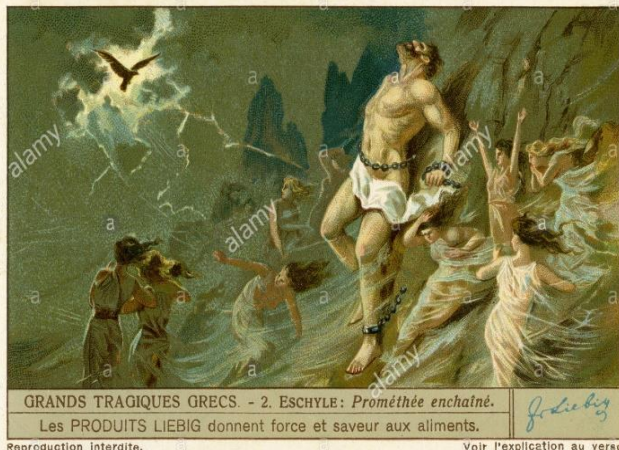


THE CAUCASUS – ANCIENT PERIOD

Overview

The Caucasus is one of the most diverse, ethnically and linguistically, and challenging region on earth. It has been regarded as a land of conflict. The Caucasus' cultural and political history is the most turbulent one that reflects a complex succession of peoples and influences from many



neighboring countries. It is the earliest urban civilizations developed from the 2nd millennium. There have been many routes of migration, invasion, and trade. However, it was an area isolated, and had no border with Europe.

The name Caucasus is mentioned for the first time in an ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus's tragedy *Prometheus Bound* in the 5th century BCE.

According to Greek mythology, it was during the 8th century that Greek mariners who were sailing along the Black Sea began to build colonies in the North Caucasus, and traveled along the western coastal plain of Georgia, Colchis.

Plinius the Elder, in his *Natural History* (*Naturalis Historia*) (77-79 CE) sees the origin of the name of the Caucasus in the Scythian words *kroy-khasis* (white with snow).

The name Caucasus later 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 divided into north and south. The northern part of the Caucasus is named the *Ciscaucasus* (Severnyj Kavkaz) and the southern part of the Caucasus - the *Transcaucasus* (Zakavkazye).

The South Caucasus includes three independent states: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia .

The North Caucasus is comprised of seven autonomous republics and they are all under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation: the autonomous republics Kabardino–Balkaria, Adygea, Karachay–Cherkessia, North Ossetia, Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan.

EVENTS

Paleolithic period (Stone Age) Hunter-Gatherer Societies

During the Paleolithic period (500,000–10,000 BCE), the archeological findings tell us that the roots of the early people in the Caucasus territory go back to the distant past, the period of a primitive-communal system; and that the first humans came to Eastern Europe during the very early period of the Stone Age, approximately 700,000 years ago. Archeologists have found evidence that showed the beginning of the expansion began from the south; and these people began to settle in Abkhazia and Armenia.

During the Paleolithic period almost all humans survived by hunting and gathering. Such societies were generally small in size and with no distinct social classes. Stone Age peoples used natural formations such as caves and overhangs as shelter from the elements, and later they made tents to live in. The tools used by the people who lived in these caves were generally made from flint and were very basic in design, requiring only a few strokes to make. These stone tools were then used to prepare wood and bone to create other tools and implements.



*Archeological Findings in the Caucasus –
The medieval village Dmanisi, Georgia*

Humans have been settled in the Caucasus since 200,000 BCE. During the excavations 1.8 million year-old prehuman remains were discovered.

Mesolithic Age (Middle Stone Age) – Hunter-gatherer societies

During Mesolithic period (10,000–8000 BCE) people learned how to make spears and arrows to use in hunting. Fishing became important. As they left their sedentary life and habitats and followed a mobile hunting way of life, their shelters became temporary tents. In winter they lived in caves and dugouts.

The Gobustan (Azerbaijan) National Historical-Artistic Preserve depicts several human figures, and possibly a representation of a boat.

During this period they also built small rafts and boats to use the rivers and lakes to move to their new habitats. This new way of life turned large patrimonial collectives into constantly moving small groups that lived by hunting and fishing.



Neolithic Age (New Stone Age) - Agricultural Societies

During the Neolithic period (8000–5000 BCE) the most important development was the transition from simply gathering to a production economy.

People began to unite, forming the basis for the creation of ethnic groups. They began to deal with agriculture for the first time, and cattle breeding (sheep, goats, pigs etc.). The earliest pottery was found in Göytepe and Hacı Elamxanlı Tepe, Azerbaijan.

Early Neolithic Age

Eneolithic/Chalcolithic period (Copper Stone Age)(5000–3000 BCE)

Emergence of the first state societies

During this age, in addition to farming and cattle breeding, the development of metal working increased. The tribes lived near copper and tin deposits and began to use metals for their tools (lead, bronze, gold, silver and tin).



The primitive-communal system was replaced by slaveholding societies. Large-scale slaveholding societies appeared in the north of the Black Sea and Transcaucasus. This development led to the emergence of larger tribal unions and large cultural communities.

They discovered the wheel and potter's wheel, and the first fortified settlements were established. In addition, they had strong ties with the Near East.

A pottery from the Leyla-Tepe culture in the Agdam district of Azerbaijan

Rock art panels found at Gobustan, in Azerbaijan (the Bronze Age)

Early Bronze Age - Maykop Culture (3700-3000 BCE)

The tribes of the Maykop culture mostly settled in the northwestern and central part of the North Caucasus.



Early Bronze Age - Kura–Araks Culture (4000-2000BCE)

The main archeological findings of the Kura-Araks Culture were found in the eastern part of the North Caucasus and in the South Caucasus.



4,000-Year-Old Burial with Chariots in Georgia

Middle Bronz Age - Trialeti Culture (2000-1000BCE)

The artifacts discovered in Georgia and Armenia showed similarities to those that were found in Iraq and in Iran.

Middle Bronz Age - Dolmen Culture (2000BCE)

This culture spread to the Caucasus and the Black Sea area. The excavations in Abkhazia and Georgia show that the people of the Caucasus built burial tombs (dolmens) that look like stone tables.

Dolmen near the Zhane river in the North Caucasus



Late Bronze Age - Koban Culture-Bronze (1100-400BCE)

The archeological findings show the existence of other cultures that emerged in the North Caucasus. Together with the Koban culture, the Kayakent-Kharachoy and Kobyakov cultures also existed in the same area and show many similarities.

In particular, the Vainakh nation were claimed to be descendants of the Koban and Kayakent-Kharachoy cultures, who were in contact with the Scythians, Sarmatians and Alans in the north and the Georgians, Armenians and Persians in the south.

During this Age, the first tribal unions such as the Diaukhi, Kolkha, Cimmerians, etc. emerged.

Early Trading Routes

The area continued to grow and became more attractive for traders. They used an ancient trade route along the Hrazdan River (from Iran to Georgia) called the Early Silk Route. Traders also brought goods from the Far East to the Black Sea by using the Caspian and Black Sea route.



Early Iron Age

In the 8th and the 7th century BCE, iron replaced bronze and stone. In the 4th century CE, iron was widely used in the Caucasus. This was also the time when the first class societies and state formations such as Iberia, Kolkhis and Caucasian Albania appeared. There were also tribal unions like the Scythians, Sarmatians and Alans who made a contribution to the formation of the Ossetians and neighboring peoples. New kingdoms such as Assyria and Urartu (Ararat) emerged.



The development of iron tools had a profound impact on almost all aspects of society, including trade, crafts and agriculture. In the early Iron Age the practice of nomadic pastoralism became widespread across the steppes of Eurasia. However, the need to follow their herds and disputes over pastureland led to increasing conflict among nomadic peoples. These conflicts stimulated the formation of large-scale alliances between tribes, and

the appearance of the earliest states. As a result, both small, fortified urban centers and even true cities began to develop in this period. In addition, Greek colonization of the northern Black Sea coast, followed by the founding of Greek city-states began in the 7th century BCE. It is at this point that this region of southern Russia and its people come onto the historical stage. They appear in Assyrian, Greek and Roman sources due to their commercial and cultural links with these civilizations.

Kingdoms in the South Caucasus

Assyrians and Urtians (Kingdom of Ararat or Kingdom of Van)

After the Hittite Empire and Mitanni (Hurrian, Indo-Aryan) in Syria broke apart, and Egypt and Babylon lost their power, new powers such as the Assyrians and Urtians¹ appeared.

¹ Proto-Armenians came into contact with Urtians in the 3rd-2nd millennium BCE.

In the 13th century BCE, Assyria became a threat for the Armenians when King Salmanasar I led campaigns to the region. Therefore, the Armenian tribes and Urartians united against the Assyrians, and later they formed a centralized state named Urartu in the 9th century with its capital Tushpa (present-day Van).



Ancient Urartu Culture: Tree of Life, 1200 BCE

During the reign of king Sarduri I Urartian territory was expanded. During Argishti I and Sarduri II, the kingdom stretched from the South Caucasus to Iran and Turkey. Urartu was called Arminiya in Old Persian.

For a while, the Urartians prevented the Assyrians from using the trade routes between Asia and the West. However, as a result of repeated Assyrian attacks, Urartu lost its strength in 714 BCE. The Cimmerians who had been in the region since 1200 BCE led campaigns against already weakened Urartu. Urartu began to decline in 713 BCE and finally disappeared from history in 590 BCE.

Cimmerians

The earliest people of Indo-European origin in the South Caucasus, the Cimmerians (c.1000-200 BCE) were ancient mounted nomads who settled in southern Russia and in the north of the Caucasus in the 8th-7th centuries BCE. However, the name *Cimmerian* is ambiguous in the ancient sources as it is unclear whether it refers to a specific group or whether it is a general term for any nomadic Iranian-speakers in the steppes north of the Black Sea. In his book the *Histories* (5th century BCE) the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 484-420 BCE) indicated that the Cimmerians established their control north of the Caucasus and the Black Sea by the 8th century BCE. By about 800 BCE, the Cimmerians were ousted by the Iranian-speaking Scythians. Some of the latter group travelled from Transcaucasia to Anatolia and then into northern Mesopotamia, which was subject to their raids for almost twenty years. After the defeat of the Urartians, the Cimmerians moved into Western Anatolia and conquered Phrygia in 696 BCE, defeated Lydia in 652 BCE. After that the Cimmerians began to decline, and later they were wiped out by the Assyrians.

The Cimmerians descended from the sedentary *Srubna* (*timber-grave*) culture of the 2nd millennium BCE. Their economy was based on agriculture and livestock breeding. The Cimmerian culture of Russia is also linked with the Transcaucasian culture of Gandzha-Karabakh. Scholars believe that the Sarmatians, too, descended from the *Srubna* culture in the Volga River region and the *Andronovo culture* (c. 2000–900 BCE) which developed in the southern Ural steppes and included the Scythians, Sarmatians and Alans.

Scythians

The Scythians were Indo-European, Iranian tribes who migrated from Central Asia in the 8th century BCE. By the time of the Scythians, social organization was far more complex. Although



pastoralists, the Scythians created alliances formed from a large number of tribes, and had their own armies made up primarily of pastoral nomads. Scythian ruling dynasties were above the tribes, giving them the ability to take advantage of the resources, military and economic, of many small groups, and to coordinate their activities.

Over time, as the Scythians adopted a more sedentary lifestyle and became more assimilated into local agricultural populations, their system of government became more established. Despite these developments, the Scythian dynasties lacked the permanence or the bureaucratic traditions of a true state. These strong, homogenous tribal alliances were comprised of Thracians and Proto-Slavs in the West, Finnish tribes in the north-east, and ancestors of the Adyghe people. This was the earliest class state system ruled by an aristocracy and divided into regions where the inhabitants were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding.

Eventually, trade would be as important as tribute in the Scythians' acquisition of manufactured goods. From the 6th century they began to trade with the Greek colonies along the northern Black Sea coast for precious metals, wines, olive oil,



metalwork in bronze, silver and gold. The Scythians also had services to sell, particularly military services. They served as mercenaries for cash payments or prestige goods.

Gold Scythian belt buckle discovered in Mingachevir, Azerbaijan, 7th century BCE

They engaged in a war with the Cimmerians for 30 years and drove the Cimmerians out of their territory north of the Caucasus. As a result, the Scythians expanded their territory to the north of the Caucasus and into today's Azerbaijan.

Scythia was strong enough to resist the occupation of the Persian king Darius I in 513 BCE. Their relations worsened, and a war broke out in 339 BCE in which the Scythian king Atheios died, leading to the decline of Scythia.



Caucasian Albanians

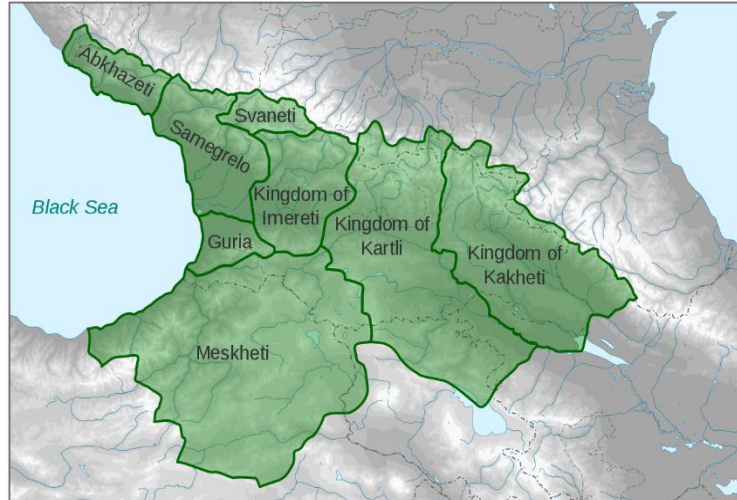
In the 1st century, Strabo in his *Geographica* gave a description of people who lived in northern Azerbaijan, a territory known then as Caucasian Albania. For centuries Caucasian Albania was under the domination of Persian kingdoms. They ruled the area from the 2nd century BCE to the 8th CE century. The Seljuks expanded into the territory in the 11th century, and the indigenous Albanian people were assimilated.

A stone with inscriptions in the Caucasian Albanian language, found in Mingachevir, Azerbaijan



Georgian Kingdoms

In the 12th century BCE, between Euphrates and Chorokhi rivers the very early Georgian tribal union, called Diaukhi was formed.



On the Black Sea coast, Kolkhis and Kartli were the other Georgian tribal unions that appeared around the 13th century BCE. At the beginning they were constantly at war with Diaukhi. They later consolidated into one nation.

Kingdom of Diaukhi

The Kingdom of Diaukhi, the first Georgian tribal union, emerged in northeastern Anatolia in the 12th century BCE.

Kingdom of Kolkhis In the 6th century BCE, the kingdom of Kolkhis was the second tribal union which emerged in the valley of the Rioni River. The ports of Kolkhis were important for trade between Europe and the Caucasus.

Kingdom of Kartli

The kingdom of Kartli was established around 300 BCE by Parnavaz I Mtskheta. It was situated on a very important commercial route which connected Caucasian Albania, Armenia and Turkey.

Kingdom of Armenia

The Armenian kingdom, which replaced Urartu in the 6th century BCE, became the first Armenian state, and later became a satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire established in the 6th century BCE by Cyrus the Great. During this period, the territory was ruled by the Orontid (Yervanduni) Dynasty. Until Alexander the Great conquered the territory in the 4th century BCE, it remained a separate province.

The land of Armenia divided into two regions:



Greater Armenia (*Armenia Maior*) was situated east of the Euphrates. It includes contemporary Armenia, northeastern Anatolia and parts of northern Persia.

Lesser Armenia (*Armenia Minor*) was situated west of the Euphrates.

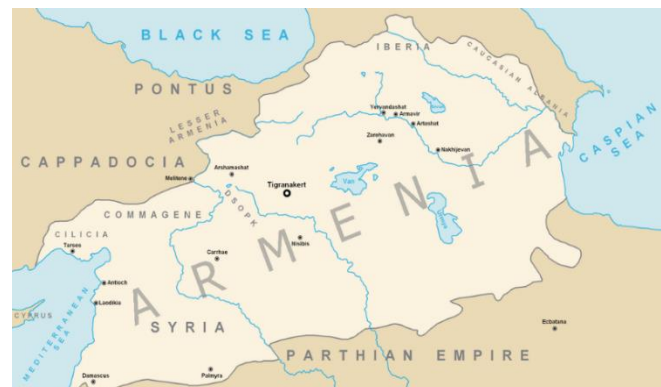
Other Armenian kingdoms were Sophene, Commagene and Cilicia.

After the collapse of Urartu, the land came to be under the administration of the Persian Median Empire and the Scythians.

Armenians arrived in Anatolia in the 8th century BCE and intermingled with Urartu. Then the Orontid Dynasty came to power in Anatolia (570 BCE-200 BCE). Later the territory was conquered by the first Persian Empire, the Achaemenids. The Orontid Dynasty controlled the region and it remained a satrapy of the Achaemenids until Alexander the Great's conquest in the 4th century.

Artashesian Dynasty

The Artashesian (Artaxiad) Dynasty ruled Armenia from 189 BCE until the Romans came in 12 CE. Their territory included Greater Armenia, Sophene and Lesser Armenia and parts of Mesopotamia.



Kingdoms in the North Caucasus

Sarmatians

The Sarmatians, a confederation of nomadic Iranian tribes (Aorsians, Alans, Roxolani, Siraces, and lazyges), replaced the Scythians and settled in the north Caucasus around the 6th century BCE. They were a nomadic people of Iranian origin, and first appear in the historical record in Eastern Europe, south of the Urals and east of the Don River, in the 8th century BCE. However, they vanished when their land was overrun by the Huns in the late 4th century CE and were displaced by a Germanic tribe, the Goths. The Sarmatians are first mentioned in Herodotus's Histories. They are known as the Roxolani, an ancestor of the Sarmatians and the Alans. A later Iranian nomadic tribe, the Alans, who lived in the North Caucasus are believed to be the descendants of the Sarmatians.



The Sarmatians were organized not on the basis of individual ethnic tribes, but rather on the basis of tribal confederations. This was a result of their assimilation of various other ethnic groups in the process of their long movement to the west.

The Sarmatians were organized in a strict hierarchy. At the top were the *argaragantes*, the aristocratic military elite, and at the bottom were the slaves, the *limigantes*, who were the true labor force. Sarmatian society remained nomadic, with tribes moving in *kibitkas*, covered wagons, or on horseback. Sarmatian society retained some matriarchal characteristics (for example, women could be warriors until they married) in its early period, however this would change over time. With increasing tribal organization, the power of military leaders increased, and changes in tactics, armor, weapons and riding equipment (the metal stirrup) all led to women being excluded from a military role in Sarmatian society.

The Sarmatians were nomadic traders and metal workers who engaged in hunting and in pastoral occupations. A measure of their power can be seen in the fact that the Greek colonies settled in the northern shores of the Black Sea were forced to pay tribute to the Sarmatians. Their herds provided them with most of their basic needs, such as food and clothing. During the winter the Sarmatians lived in the southern Russian steppes between the Black and Caspian Seas and close to the large rivers. In the spring they would migrate north to find summer pastures.

Alans

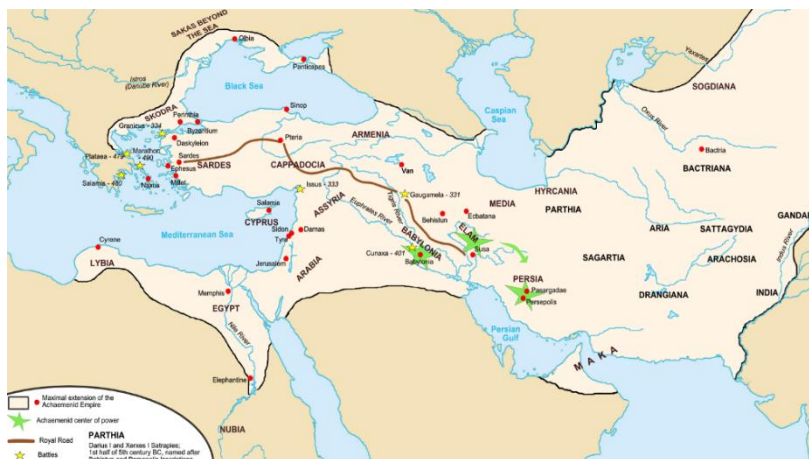
In the second half of the 1st century CE, the Alans, a Iranian nomadic people, began to replace the Sarmatians and expanded their territory from the Don river to the Caucasus Mountains.

In the 3rd and 4th centuries, when the Goths and the Huns arrived, they were forced to move to the west.

Some of the Alans stayed under the rule of the Huns. The remaining Alans were forced by the Mongols into the Caucasus, where they appear as the Ossetians.

The Empires that Ruled the Caucasus

The Caucasus history has experienced numerous conquest by the empires from the south, the north, the west and the east. The area became very important to Persia for their trade into the north creating a passage over land and over sea. The Caspian Sea was enclosed inland body of water that was located on Persia's northern border. It was heavily used for trade between adjacent empires. One of them was Persian Empire. The extensive coast line of the Caspian Sea allowed Persia to built its navy and to train.



Persian Achaemenid Empire (550 -330 BCE): The first Persian Empire, Achaemenid Empire was founded by Darius I the Great in the 6th century BCE, and it dominated the Caucasus region between 550 – 330 BCE.

Persian rule in the North Caucasus (Cis-Caucasus) area did not last long. In the South Caucasus (Transcaucasus), the

Armenian state became a Persian satrapy in the 6th century BCE. In 559 BCE, the Persian king Cyrus II the Great annexed the area. In 330 BCE, the Greek king Alexander of Macedon (the Great) launched a campaign against the Achaemenid Empire and conquered the whole territory. Armenia became independent and recognized Greek rule. After Alexander's death in 323 BCE, his empire was split into three.

Hellenistic Seleucid Empire (312-63 BCE): Alexander's general, Seleucus I Nicator founded the Seleucid Dynasty and conquered the Achaemenid Empire and it became part of the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire.



Lesser Armenia became an independent Armenian kingdom. By the end of the 3rd BCE, almost all Armenian lands, provinces of the Armenian Kingdom Sophene and Armenia Proper included, came under Seleucid control. However, the Seleucids did not exert full authority. In 190 BCE, they were defeated by the Romans. Taking advantage of this situation, the Armenian king Artashes (Artaxias) I the Great revolted against the Seleucids, and liberated the lands of Greater Armenia in 189 BCE, and established the Artashesian dynasty (190 BCE- 12 CE).

Roman Control (1st century BCE): Around 100 BCE, the Roman Empire expanded its rule over the Caucasus and extended the Empire's borders from the Caspian Sea to Egypt.

The Armenian king Tigranes II the Great, whose empire became a part of the East Roman Empire, united all the Armenian lands. He also constructed four large cities called Tigranakert.

Tigranes II the Great united all the split provinces such as Sophene, part of Lesser Armenia, Media Atropatene and parts of Iberia and Caucasian Albania, under his territory. He also created a political union with the King of Pontus and Armenia Minor, Mithradates VI.

Parthian Empire (247BCE-224CE):

When the Seleucids began to decline, the Parthian Empire gained control over the eastern provinces of the Empire in the 3rd century BCE. The Parthian Empire began to expand westward, and the Kingdom of Armenia and the late Roman Republic stopped their advance. They were only partially successful in the Caucasus, and their conquest in Armenian lands was short-lived.



Kingdom of Pontus (281BCE-62CE):

In 104–103 BCE, the king of Pontus Mithridates VI, after the annexation of Great Colchis and parts of Lesser Armenia, concentrated on Anatolia. Towards the end of the 2nd century BCE Mithridates VI's expansion to the east began to annoy the Roman Empire and resulted in constant state of war with

each other.

The king of Pontus, Mithridates VI and the Armenian king Tigranes II established a political and military union against the Romans.

In 70 BCE the Roman general Lucullus conquered all of Mithridates VI's territories, and the Pontian king had to flee to Armenia with the help of his son-in-law Tigranes II. Tigranes II refused to return Mithridates VI, and as a result the Romans attacked Armenia in 69 BCE. However, Lucullus had to go back to Rome to suppress a mutiny. Mithridates VI regained his lost territories with the help of Tigranes II. In 66 BCE Lucullus was succeeded by Pompeius Magnus. The war against Mithridates VI continued.

Mithridates VI escaped to Kolkhis. In 65 BCE Pompeius pursued Mithridates VI as far as Kolkhis, and from there he moved eastward and gained control of the region.

Roman Control in the South Caucasus:

The Romans gained control over the entire South Caucasus, but they did not want to rule the territory directly because of the great cultural differences. Therefore, they created vassal states, and the local rulers were allowed to govern independently.

During the Roman occupation Kolkhis was in political turmoil, Kartli and Albania became allies of Rome, and Armenia was forcibly subjugated.



The Roman Empire (265 B.C.-167 A.D.) had expanded from the city of Rome until it included the whole land around the Mediterranean.

Arshakid Dynasty (Partian):

The Armenian king Artavazd II, who came to power in 53 BCE with the help of the Parthians, fought for independence from Rome. When Parthia was weakened, and could not support Armenia, the Romans forced Armenia to recognize Roman sovereignty.



By the end of the 1st century BCE Parthia gained its strength back and began to challenge Rome to establish its influence in Armenia, and to make Armenia its own province.

The Romans and the Parthians eventually reached an agreement to make Armenia (Arshakid) subject to their joint rule. In reality, Roman influence was minimal, while Parthia's influence was strongly felt.

In 66 CE, the Roman emperor Nero crowned Tiridates I of Parthia. Tiridates I had been the king of Armenia since 62 CE, but he had to make his dependence on Rome known publicly. This was the period when the Arshakid Dynasty appeared in semi-independent Armenia.

Roman rule in Kartli and Caucasian Albania:

Kartli was not depended on Rome, and together with Caucasian Albanians, they revolted against Rome. The Romans defeated the Kartlian king Pharnabas I in 36 BCE, and established a military union with the Kartlians. This union strengthened Kartli.



Roman inscription in Gobustan National Park in Baku

During the reign of king Parsman II, Kartli extended its borders, became more independent, and began to oppose Rome. In the second half of the 2nd century, Roman influence in Kartli increased. Caucasian Albania remained a sovereign state until it was conquered by the Romans in the 2nd century CE.

Persian Sassanids and Eastern Rome:

The Sassanian Dynasty (224-651) was founded by Ardashir I after the fall of the Arshakid Parthian (Armenia), and they began to impose their religion, Zoroastrianism.

In the late 3rd century, the Roman Empire began to disintegrate, and its capital was moved from Rome to Constantinople.

In 313, the Roman emperor Constantine allowed freedom of religion. Christianity began to spread in the Caucasus, especially in Armenia and in Kartli.



Eastern Rome and Kingdom of Lazika:

During the early 3rd century Kolchhis was weakened, and a new kingdom, Lazika (Egrisi) appeared in western Georgia.

In the early 3rd century, Roman control over the region ended with the support of the Sassanids. However, this did not last too long, and the Romans regained power in Lazika.

The Kingdom of Lazika became an important buffer zone between the Sassanid and the Eastern Roman empires until the 7th century. Later, the Kingdom of Lazika became an Abkhazian territory under Eastern Roman authority.

Sassanid Empire - Vassal Kartli:

As a part of the Sassanid Empire, Kartli was ruled by the Sassanid king Shapur I (240–270).

In the 4th century, Christian Kartlians established a political and military union with the Romans to fight against the Sassanids. However, Rome had been weakened, they could not defend Kartli, and in 368 the Sassanid King Shapur II conquered Kartli and deposed the Kartli king Saurmag II.

With the help of Rome, Saurmag II forced Shapur II to sign an agreement. Part of Kartli was ruled by Saurmag II and the rest of Kartli was ruled by a Sassanid official. At the end of the 5th century Kartli officially became a Sassanid vassal state.

Caucasian Albania during the Sassanid Empire:

Caucasian Albania was under the rule of the Sassanids, but it was partially autonomous.

For the Sassanids, Albania was an important place to control the mountain passes of the Caucasus chain to prevent any attacks by nomadic tribes from the Northern Caucasus.

Because the North Caucasian nomadic tribes made an alliance with Rome, the Sassanids used the Caucasian Albanians to fight against them.

However, in the 5th century, the Caucasian Albanians began to unite with many Turkic tribes coming from Central Asia and Siberia, and in 450–451 the Albanians together with these tribes revolted against the Sassanids. Caucasian Albania gained its independence in 629.



Armenia, 387-591 A.D.



Persian Armenia – Eastern Roman Armenia:

To end the Sassanids rule in their territory, the ruler of the Armenian Arshakids asked for help from Rome. But, the Sassanids defeated the Romans, killed the king, and replaced him with a pro-Sassanid Armenian.

Later, with the help of the Romans, the Armenian Tiridates III took the throne. The Sassanids lost a major battle against Rome, and they had

to sign a 40-year peace agreement and recognize Armenia and Kartli as Roman protectorates. After the end of the 40-year peace agreement, fighting resumed between the Sassanids and the Romans.

While the king of Armenia, Tiridates III was dealing with the Armenian aristocracy, the Sassanids invaded Armenia. In 387, Armenia was divided: the Romans took the western part, and Sassanians the eastern part.

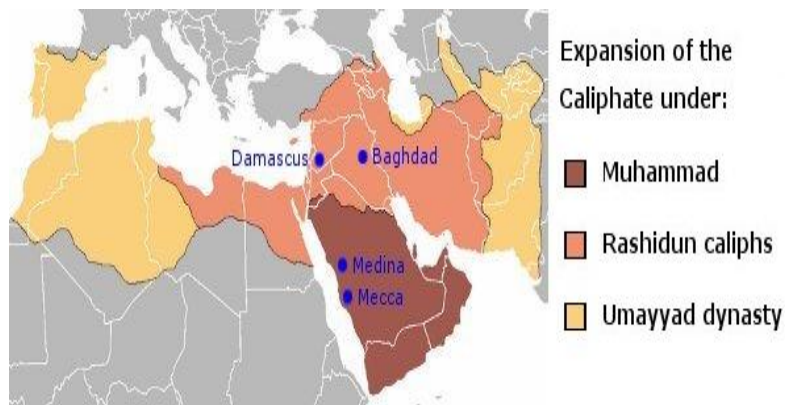
Sassanid and Eastern Roman Empires:

Arshakid Armenia stayed as a vassal state of the Sassanid Empire until 428, and after that the Armenian aristocrats (nakharars) took power.

Sassanid – Roman wars continued for decades (420–560), and in 561, a new demarcation line between the two empires was established, but fighting continued until the early 7th century.

Arab Conquest of the Caucasus Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphates:

After the death of the prophet Mohammed in 632, the Arab invasion of the Caucasus started.



During the rule of his successors, the Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphates, the North Caucasus turned into a place for the rapid expansion of Muslim power.

The Arab conquest caused the Sassanid Empire to collapse, and the Byzantine Empire's military and economic might waned.

In 637, the 3rd Caliph Uthman Ibn Affan (Osman) captured Media Atropatene (southern Azerbaijan) in the Southern Caucasus. As a result, Islam began to spread in the region.

Armenia and Georgia were invaded in 642, and in 650 Armenia fell. The Arabs did not stay in Armenia. The Arabs reached Daghestan in the east and Kartli in the west. Tbilisi was captured in 645, but the Arabs could not take Lazika because it was still under Byzantine control. Caucasus Albania was also subjugated.

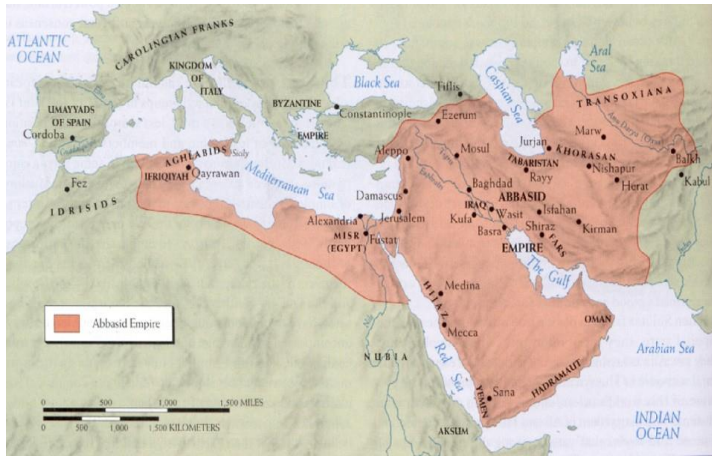
The Arabs called the whole of the South Caucasus the Emirate of Arminiya (Armenia, Georgia, Caucasus Albania).

The Arabs, during the reign of Umar, reestablished their influence in Atropatene between 639 and 643.

Umayyad Caliphate (661-750):

By the 8th century, the Arabs had established control over part of the Northeastern Caucasus and the entire South Caucasus. Lazika was still under Byzantine control.

Armenia was ruled 200 years by the Arabs as a military post, granting the Armenian provinces some autonomy.



Arab Abbasid Dynasty 749-1258:

In the second half of the 8th century when the Abbasid Dynasty came to power, they conquered Armenia, built their garrisons in Armenian towns, and opened its plains to the Khazars to drive the Armenian peasants into the mountains.

Turkic Khazar Empire (650-1048):

The semi-nomadic Khazars (Qasar) settled in the steppes north of the

Caucasus Mountains in the middle of the 6th century. The Khazars were a tribe of Turkic origin who later adopted Judaism around 740. The Khazars established the largest political organization in Eastern Europe.

The Khazars became dominant in the lands of Rus' in the 7th century. They collected taxes from the Volga Bulgars and some East Slavic tribes that were subject to them. The Khazars halted the Arab assaults that threatened Europe in the 8th century and brought peace, stability and religious tolerance to the region.

When the Khazars made an alliance with the Byzantine Empire, it became a buffer state between the Byzantine Empire and the Umayyad Caliphate. The coalition forces of the Khazars and the Byzantines fought against the Sassanids, the Umayyads and the Abbasids.

Khazaria

In 642, the Arabs reached Derbent and came close to the borders of Khazaria. The Eastern Caliphate of Bagdat crossed the Caucasus and conquered the entire Black Sea area and Eastern Europe.



The Khazars had developed their military technology to a high level. The land of the Khazars became a buffer state for the trade between Christians and Muslims. It is possible that both spheres of influence put pressure on the Khazars to adopt the Judaism.

All gold and silver mines in the Caucasus was controlled by the Khazars. Khazaria was an important trading center and the traders were Jews, Arabs and Byzantines. The main source of revenue for the Khazars was custom duties collected from these traders.

When the Khazars invaded Armenia, an Arab–Khazar war broke out in 721. However, the Arabs did not invade Khazaria and did not occupy the Northern Caucasus. The control of Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus stayed under the Khazars, but the Umayyad Caliphate tried to spread their influence in the region. After the establishment of Khazar control in the region, the Arabs withdrew.

The campaign in 737 was the end of large-scale warfare between the two powers. The war with the Khazars weakened the Umayyad army heavily, and a few years later the dynasty fell in 750.

The End of the Byzantine influence and Arab Domination:

The weakened Arab state lost their domination in the Caucasus region. After the Arabs left the area, Caucasian Albania broken into several principalities. Lazika declared its independence from the Byzantine Empire and became the kingdom of Abkhazia in 799. Kartli and Kakheti were split into small kingdoms.

Bagrationi Dynasty:

It was the Bagrationi Dynasty that united all the separate Georgian principalities in 1008. One of



the branches of this dynasty, the Bagratunis established their influence in Armenia and subjugated the Armenian noble families in 885.

This dynasty later split into several branches in the 10th century, and later the entire territory was conquered by the Byzantines and Seljuks by the 11th century. The only areas the Arabs controlled were northern part of Arran (Shirvan) and

Tbilisi.

Discussion/Questions

1-We know that early human settlements were well established in the Caucasus by 200,000 BCE. What was their origin?

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POLITICAL HISTORY

Government:

Proto-states consisted of several dozen tribes, and initially they were ruled by their chieftains and later by elected military leaders, who carried the title *King*. All prehistoric nomadic tribes did not form a formal government, but remained tribal in structure.

Initially, early people were organized in tribal groups, but these tribal groups were not ethnic in character. Not until the Neolithic period does it appear that tribal groups united to form larger units that would become the basis for later ethnic groups.

In addition, these prehistoric communities were composed of autonomous groups and villages, and did not organized themselves into any form complex enough to be regarded as a state. However, the formation of sedentary groups resulted in social organization at the level of chiefdoms with a fair degree of social stratification.

South Caucasus:

Armenia: The Kingdom of Urartu was ruled by the King and he had absolute power in the name of the god Haldi. It was a monarchic and theocratic system where the god Haldi protected the King and he was also the head priest. The king relied on a close circle of advisors. The Kingdom was a loose confederation of small kingdoms and tribal states. Each was ruled by loyal aristocrats appointed by the King.

In the 1st CE, the Armenian King was the head of the country and ruled with the help of his Court, consisted of his sons and his brothers, and members of aristocracy who were close to the King. From among them, the King appointed heads of various public services: *Hazarapet* (economy), *Sparapet* (Army), *Tagadir Aspet* (diplomatic affairs), *Senekapet* (judicial affairs) and *Krmapet* (supreme Priest).

Georgia:The Kingdom of Iberia was ruled by a king. However, when it was under Persian control, it was ruled by a *marzpan* (governor). As a result of Persian influence, the first king of Iberia, Pharnavaz adapted the governance system of the Persian Empire as a model for his state. He formed a state in which Egrisi-Colchis became an autonomous duchy, and Iberia was organized into seven duchies.

Azerbaijan: The early state formations appeared in the southern parts of today's Azerbaijan in the 3rd millennium BCE. The independent State of Caucasian Albania was established at the beginning of 3rd centuries BCE. The Albanian tribes governed by a king. There were also large tribal unions in the northern part of Albania ruled by tribal leaders. Stratification exist within the

tribes. At the top of the layers the tribal leaders, followed by warriors and pagan priests. The state structure was centralized. There was also a council of elders that depended on the ruler.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: According to the linguistic and archeological evidence, the Nakhs (Vainakh) people inhabited the highlands of the North Caucasus in the 4th and the 5th century BCE. The Nakh languages carries a few words of early Indo-European origin, testifying to relations with the Bronze Age steppe populations. They were tribal unions ruled by chieftain. They were under the rule of the Alans and the Khazars sometimes as their vassals or as their allies. Under the Hurrian and Urartu Kingdoms in 2,000-1,000 BCE, the Nakhs established a very powerful state, with strong central leadership.

The earliest state formation in the North Caucasus was *Sindika* (5th to the 4th centuries BCE) where the communal tribal system remained the primary form of social organization. Transition from this communal tribal system to the class system leading to the emergence of social inequality of unequal status in society was accomplished at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE.

Discussion/Questions

1- What was the Persian impact on the state structure in the Caucasus?

Reading

1- Chernykh, E.N., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017.

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https://www.circassianworld.com/pdf/The_Vainakhs_George_Anchabadze.pdf

MILITARY:

South Caucasus:

Armenia: The Urartian King commanded the army in the name of the god Haldi. His military consisted of infantry, heavy armored cavalry (Ayruzdi), and chariot warriors. The military was organized into units of 3000 fighters each that, in turn, were divided into groups of 50-man battalions. The entire male population had an obligation to serve in the military. Each local nakharar (nobility) provided 25,000 to 40,000 men for the army. There were also *Levies* (soldiers) who were drafted from the commoners.

Georgia: The Iberians used heavy cavalry and light infantry commanded by a king. They were heavily under the military influence of the Persians through their cultural and military contacts. Shida Kartli as a special region ruled by a *spaspet* (army commander). The Georgian army comprised of *Tavadi* (Prince), *Monaspa Guard* (Royal Guard), *Aznauri* (nobles), *Batoni* (lords),

Amirspasalar (commander-in-chief), *Aznavuri cavalry* (nobles heavy cavalry), *Tadzreuli* (heavy infantry), *Qarma* (light infantry), *Metsikhovne* (spearman) and *Monapire* (borderman).

Azerbaijan: The Albanian military consisted of heavy cavalry (22,000) and infantry (60,000) in the 1st century BCE.

Under the influence of Parthian cultural and military, the iron armor included into the Albanian cavalry.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: The Nakh people were mountain dwellers, remained at the tribal level and had a military organization comprised of small bands of warriors *gheri* and their leaders *byachi*. They ambushed and plundered villages, captured people and their livestock.

Discussion/Questions

1. How did the South Caucasus people organize their military forces?

Reading

1- Chernykh, E.N., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017.

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4- Batmaz, A. "War And Identity In The Early History Of Urartu", *Anatolian Iron Ages 7 The Proceedings of the Seventh Anatolian Iron Ages Colloquium Held at Edirne, 19–24 April 2010*, Edited by Altan Cilingiroglu and Antonio Sagona, PEETERS, 2010, pp.23-50

5- Rayfield, D., *Edge of Empires, A History of Georgia*, Reaktion Books, 2012.

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SOCIAL HISTORY

CLASS:

South Caucasus:

Georgia: In Georgia, a class of wealthy aristocrats who later became rulers of the south Caucasus were led by a sovereign whose authority was hereditary. According to the *Geographica* written by Strabo, the Georgian population was divided into groups: at the top were the king and aristocrats, then the clergy, knights, landlords, and slaves.

Armenia: Armenian social stratification carried influences of Persian customs. The monarchy was at the top. The nobles, knights, city dwellers, laborers, peasants came after the monarch, and slaves were the lowest class. Slave labor was mainly used in the construction of palaces, fortresses, temples and irrigation canals.

Azerbaijan: During ancient times, there were state organizations in the south and large tribal unions in the north of the Caucasian Albania. These unions were governed by tribal leaders. Within the tribal unions, at the top of the layers, tribal leaders, warriors and priests. Second layer included military officials and farmers, the third layer consisted of common people. There were a fourth class of free men who engaged with agriculture, crafts and trade.

North Caucasus: The Nakh people were a clan-based and egalitarian society. Chechen (and Ingush) society has always been unstratified. Each clan was ruled by a chieftain. Clans and villages were autonomous. Clans were different sizes but equal in status.

Discussion/Questions

1. How did the Persians influence the social structure of the South Caucasus?

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1- Chernykh, E.N., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017

2- Khachikyan, A., *History of Armenia, A Brief Review*, Edit Print, 2010.

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5- Zardabli, Ismail bey, *The History of Azerbaijan*, Rossendale Books, 2014.

GENDER:

South Caucasus:

Georgia: Under the influence of Persian culture, polygamy was practiced. The roles of women and their individual freedom were severely limited in society. Women took care of domestic work.

Women traditionally held a prestigious place in Georgian society and were treated with great respect. Nevertheless, they were sometimes regarded as a minor evil, disease spreading spirits (dobilni).

Armenia: In ancient times, there were female rulers in Armenia like Erato, Parandzem, Zapel. The kings' wives also had important role in courts. The women were considered as head of the family structure. They even joined in military operations.

Azerbaijan: During the tribal community, people were united via a kinship of mother line. Women played a very important role. In Caucasian Albania, there were women warriors, Scythian, Sarmatian and Saka, fighting on horseback.

During the 8th - 7th century BCE, this matriarchal family structure began to disappear after the Bronze Age, when the male labor required more power and strength to handle hardwork.

In the 1st century BCE, the semi-nomadic Sakas allowed their women to have many rights and to serve in the army.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: According to ancient sources, there were warrior women in the North Caucasus. They were isolated from men and took part in expeditions, rode on horseback, and hunted.

Discussion/Questions

1. What was the role of the women in the military?

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1-Chernykh, E.N., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017

2-Khachikyan, A., *History of Armenia, A Brief Review*, Edit Print, 2010.

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5-

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INNOVATION:



South Caucasus: Stone age people developed new technologies to make different types and sizes of stone tools, such as the spears and arrows they used to hunt. Acheulian handaxes were found on the Javakheti Plateau, Georgia.

Late Bronze age people invented the wheel to use for both the potter's wheel, as well as creating a revolution in transportation. In a burial site in Georgia, archeologist discovered two chariots, each with four wooden wheels from the late 15th century BCE.

Pottery fragments of ceramic jars recovered from the sites of Gadachrili Gora and Shulaveris Gora carried residues showing that the production of wine dates back 9.000 years.





Invention of the Georgian alphabet: According to Georgian chronicle *The Lives of the Kings of Kartli*, the proto-Georgian script *Asomtavruli* was invented in the 4th century BCE by King Parnavaz I of Iberia. According to the Georgian chronicler Leonti Mroveli, King Parnavaz spread the Georgian language and created Georgian *mtsignobroba*, “script” or “literacy”.

The oldest inscriptions (5th century) were found in the church of *Bolnisi Sioni* near Tbilisi.

Lelo burti: It was an ancient football that had some notable similarities to rugby played with a field ball.

Armenia:

First Unified State: The Kingdom of Van was established in the 9th century and it was the first unified state on the territory of the Armenian Plateau which existed from the till the 6th centuries BCE.

Alphabet: The early inscription used by the Urartian Kingdom was the Assyrian cuneiform and the language of the Urartu known as *Urartian* did not belong to Indo-European language family.

With the adoption of Christianity in the 4th century, the creation of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots in the 5th century was a pivotal invention in the development of Armenian history and national identity.

Irrigation system: Artificial irrigation system was created by carving tunnels in solid rock. 70 km-long irrigation canal was built by the king Menua in the 9th century from the Hoşap Valley to Van.

Duduk: The *Duduk's* history in Armenia was dated to 1st century BCE. Besides Armenia, the *Duduk* can be found in the whole Caucasus.

Azerbaijan: Between the 2nd and the 1st millenium BCE, Mannaeans established the most powerful state in the south of Azerbaijan. They had knowledge on the medicine, astronomy and geometry. Around Lake Urmia, they constructed irrigation channels.

North Caucasus: Bronze age people in the North Caucasus created copper and tin deposits and used metals for their tools as found in Baksan River Gorge, Kabardino-Balkaria.

Wheeled wagons were also discovered in the Northern Caucasus during the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE.

In the 4th millennium BCE, a metal spear *the Khalkhan* and *the Ghagha* were used for personal defence.



Discussion/Questions

1. What do the new discoveries tell us about the development of ancient technologies?
2. In what different fields did the invention of the wheel have an impact?

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- 1- Chernykh, E., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017.
- 2- Grousset, R., *The Empire of the Steppes, A History of Central Asia*, Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- 3- Palumbi, G., "The Early Bronze Age of the Southern Caucasus", <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935413.001.0001/oxford-hb-9780199935413-e-14>
- 4- Owen, J., "4,000-Year-Old Burial with Chariots Discovered in South Caucasus" <https://www.livescience.com/46513-ancient-chariot-burial-discovered.html>
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ECONOMY

Agriculture, animal husbandry and cottage industries constituted the basic dynamics of the traditional economy of the peoples of the Caucasus. The main crops they grew were barley, wheat, millet and maize. Archeological finds (9000 year old wine jars) showed that the wine production was an early element of the Georgian economy. Carpet weaving was an economic activity in Russia, Dagestan, Armenia and Caucasian Albania.

TRADE: Foreign trade was undoubtedly the primary factor in shaping the policy of all the kingdoms in the Caucasus.

South Caucasus:

Georgia: In the Black Sea port of Dioskuiras (Abkhasia) and Sarapana (Shorapani) there were active trading on the Phasis River in 550.

Colchis closely connected with the Greeks through trade. They imported artifacts, including Greek painted pottery for the storage and transported oil, honey and wine.

Armenia: In the Kingdom of Urartu, the most developed fields of economic activity was based on agriculture, farming, cattle breeding, winemaking and horse breeding.

In the Kingdom, the slave trade was another major activity. Slaves built irrigation systems with channels and water reservoirs providing water for agriculture in river valleys.

The state conducted military campaigns to get booty, and to establish control over international trade which provided a serious economic return for the state. Ani was a major commercial and trade center.

The coins found in large quantities in archeological excavations indicate that in the Georgian states trade was highly developed and the states were very wealthy. The people of Colchis imported goods from neighboring Greece and Persia, and they traded in gold and precious metals.

During the Artashesian period, private economic enterprises such as *dastakerts* and *agaraks* emerged.

Azerbaijan: In Atropatena, the bilateral trade connections were built with the other Caucasian states, Mesopotamia, Asia, Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea.

In the Caucasian Albania, domestic and foreign trade were the major sources of their income. The caravan routes passed through the coast of the Caspian Sea and connected the East with the West.

The Caucasian Albania was also rich in minerals. The caravans transported gold, silver, copper, iron, copper, fine salt, red quartz etc. The goods from India were transported to the Black Sea through the Amu-Darya and the Caspian Sea.

North Caucasus: In the Early Bronze Age, Mesopotamian cultural influence became stronger in the North Caucasus due to increased trade and economic contacts and migrations from the Mesopotamia to the North Caucasus. They also built strong ties with the Georgian states for trade and military purpose against the threat of the Arabs invasion. The Vainakhs also established trade connections with the Middle East.

Discussion/Questions

1. How did the early settlers conduct their trade, and which routes did they use?

Readings

1- Chernykh, E., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017.

2-Grousset, R., *The Empire of the Steppes, A History of Central Asia*, Rutgers University Press, 2002.

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CULTURAL HISTORY

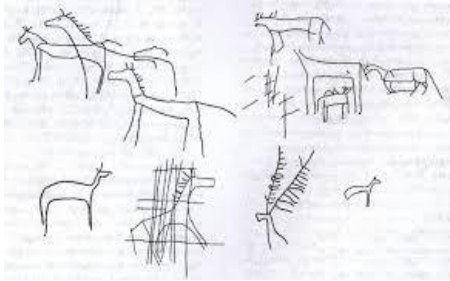


VISUAL ARTS:

Painting:

South Caucasus: Cave painting was found in Gobustan, Caucasian Albania, depicting people fishing. This rock art dates back to Paleolithic period.

In Ordubad Rayon, archeologists also found cave paintings (Gamigaya petroglyphs) depicting dancing individuals dating back to the Bronze age.



In the Tsalka Municipality, Georgia the archeologists discovered the Trialeti petroglyphs which carried geometric images and animal shapes.

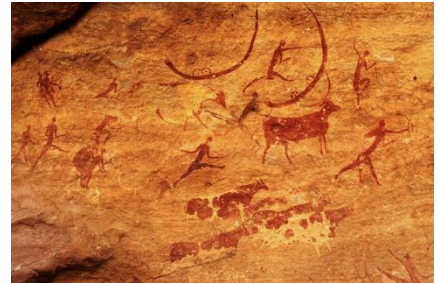


In Sukhumi a marble stela was found in the 5th century BCE, portraying a young man and a women.

There were pieces of the carved stone chancel-barrier found in Tsebelda church portraying scenes from the Old and New Testament from the 7th and 8th centuries.

North Caucasus: Around Lake Kezenoyam, the archeologists found cave paintings depicting individuals and boat.

In Khasaut Gorge, near the town of Kislovodsk, in the North Caucasus region of Russia archeologists found cave paintings depicting running and hunting people and animals.



On the walls of the mosque of Old Kahib in Dagestan and Chechnya ancient petroglyphs were preserved.



Architecture:

Georgia: In the 4th millennium BCE, the structures were round and built of mud bricks formed like termite mounds. There were also *kurgan* burials which had survived from the early Bronze Age period.

Cyclopean Buildings: The *Cyclopean buildings* and *fortresses* like *Shaori* were built with large stone blocks during the Bronze Age in Georgia.

Armenia: Urartian architecture has foundations on cut rocks for mud brick buildings as in the Erebuni fortress.



Grave Architecture:

These Urartian structures are built in the bulwark. Small burial chambers are constructed inside the main hall.



Urartian Castle (Castle of Van): The Urartian Castle was built in the 9th century BCE. The building is made of two materials: on the bottom floor non-mortared basalt and in the rest of the building mud-brick is used.

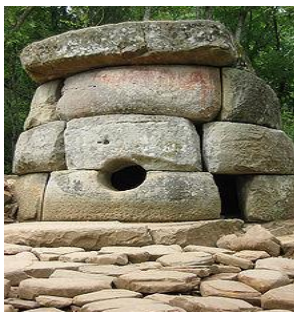
Fortress of Garni: The Fortress of Garni is built on a high cliff extending over the Azat River Gorge and was built in the 3rd century BCE.

Azerbaijan: A four-column structure, the *ateshgah* (the fire altar) is a castle-like ancient Zoroastrian structure in Baku.



North Caucasus

Chechnya:



Dolmens: Examples of Bronze Age architecture are megalithic structures called *dolmens* (burial chambers) found in the northwestern Caucasus. These monuments are dated to between the end of the 4th millennium and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE. The dolmens were built with huge stone blocks and look like tables. Archeologists have found dolmens near the Zhane river and in Gelendzhik in the Krasnodar area and in Abkhazia.

Wattle Houses: The Vainakhs had small wattle houses made of clay.

Sculpture:

South Caucasus



Georgia: One of the best examples of the Bronze age sculpture was *The Tamada Statue*, which was the symbol of the toast master of the earliest wine making, found in Vani, Georgia from the 7th century BCE.

Bronze sculptures which belong to the Hellenistic world from the 4th to 1st centuries BCE, were discovered in Vani, Georgia. The most significant piece was called *Torso of a youth*.

A golden lion discovered in Tsnori, Kakheti from the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE .



Armenia: Large carved monolithic stones are found known as *vishap-k'ar* (serpent or dragon stones) dated from the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE.



Azerbaijan:

Stone Idols: On a stone stamp found in Mingachevir the carved pattern is interpreted as the clothes of a human. This stamp is dated to the 3rd century BCE and is marked by the sign of a hexagonal sun.

North Caucasus

Chechnya: This plane-relief grave stele, dated to the 4th- 5th BCE, depicts a man with a dagger in his right hand, and was found in the village of Meskety in Chechnya.



Readings:

- 1-<https://www.urartians.com/alticerik/44/grave-architecture.html>
- 2-<http://karabakhfoundation.com/heritage-center-online/cultural-topics/architecture/>
- 3- Jaimoukha, A., *Chechens A Handbook*, Routledge, 2005.
- 4- Ibragimov, T., *Sculptural Arts in Caucasian Albania*, Baku, 2019.

Questions:

- 1- What does the number and quality of the varied artifacts found in the caucasus indicate about the level of culture and sophistication of these ancient people?

PERFORMING ARTS:

Theater:

South Caucasus

Georgia: Traces of an ancient Georgian theater, which dates back to the 3rd century BCE have been found in Uplistsikhe.

Sakhioba: Georgia has the oldest theater, called the *Sakhioba*, which dates from the 3rd century BCE. It lasted until the 17th century.

Armenia: The theater in Armenia began as a religious ritual, with *gusans* (troubadours) singing songs praising the nobleman's ancestors. There were also *voghbergus* (tragedians), and *katakagusan* (comedians).

The first Armenian theater was built during the reign of Tigran the Great in Tigranakert in 69 BCE. Tigran's son, Artavazd II built the second theater in the old capital of Artashat and became the first Armenian playwright with his numerous tragedies and orations.

Azerbaijan: In Azerbaijan, the appearance of the theater was closely linked with ancient holidays and traditional dances. Ancient traditional ceremonies, like *Sayachy*, *Novruz*, and *Gevsech* all carried some theatrical features by having choirs, dancers, and dialogues in dramatic plays. For example, in Novruz, there is a game called Kosa-Kosa that has a plot, dramatic scenes and actors wearing masks and special clothes.

North Caucasus

Chechnya: Theatrical features were attested in religious festivals, in wartime, at youth parties, and during music and dancing contests.

Dance:

South Caucasus: As depicted in the Gamigaya petroglyphs, dancing is a very old tradition in the Caucasus.

Georgia: According to the *Anabasis* written by the Greek historian Xenophon in the 3rd century BCE, dancing and songs were used by the Georgians. The Georgian *Khorumi*, a war dance, originated in the 6th century BCE.

In a bowl dated back to the 2nd millennia BCE found in Trialeti, a carved circle dance scene shows that in Georgia dance and songs were used for ritual purposes (to show respect to *Shushpa* – the Moon God) and hunting (to show respect to the Goddess Dali).

In Bagineti, a female figure performing ritual dances to show respect to the God of fertility is found carved on a bone dated back to the 6th century BCE.

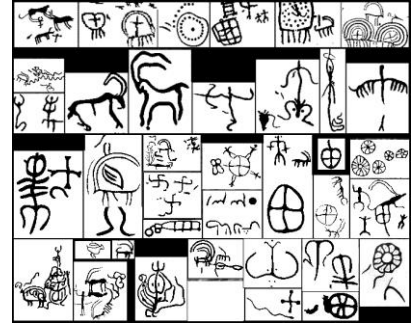
Khorumi

The dance *Khorumi* is an ancient dance which belonged to Diaokh and Colchis. It was an exclusively male dance.

Armenia: There are rock paintings depicting scenes of dancing found in the town of Sisian in the Syunik province of Armenia dating back to the Paleolithic Era.



Azerbaijan: The dance scenes in the Gobustan rock pictures show that people performed dances for ritual purposes and to ensure success in the hunt.



North Caucasus

Chechnya: From the Koban culture, small bronze figures from the 3rd millennium BCE depicted men performing a ritual dance on tiptoes. The dances of the Vainakh people carry some features of the old legends and myths and were accompanied by music, as in the *Dance of Old Men*, *Dances of Young Men*, and *Dances of the Maidens*.

Music

South Caucasus

Georgia: In the 1st century BCE, the Greek historian Strabo wrote that the Georgians performed multi-voiced chants as they went into battle. According to another Greek historian, Xenophon in the 3rd century BCE, Georgians sang secular, military and dancing songs.

Armenia: Armenians had long tradition of singing songs, both secular and religious. Movsēs Xorenac'i made comments on the ancient ceremonial hymn for the birth of the god Vahagn dating back to the 3rd millennium BCE.

Azerbaijan: The Caucasian Albanian culture had polyphonic choral songs. The three most ancient musical instruments were found in Mingachevir Water Basin - a *tutak*, *zurna* and *ney* made of clay or bone.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: Polyphonic music arose in the Vainakh land in the pre-Christian era. Polyphonic singing was part of their rituals to appease the spirits. The music of the Vainakhs included songs that were secular, for the dance and military.

Discussion / Questions:

1. What did ancient people depict in cave paintings and petroglyphs? What was their purpose?
2. What were the purposes of sculptures for the ancient inhabitants of Russia?
3. For what purpose were the dolmens and kurgans constructed?
4. How did the ancient Armenian folk dance originate?

Readings:

- 1- Roudik, P.L., *Culture and the Customs of the Caucasus*, Greenwood Press, 2009.
- 2- Khachikyan, A., *History of Armenia, A Brief Review*, Edit Print, 2010.
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RELIGION

South Caucasus -Paganism and Zoroastrianism

Georgia: The ancient Georgians were pagan, and worshiped multiple deities and idols. A new religion, *Zoroastrianism* arrived in the Kingdom of Iberia in the 2nd Century BCE from Persia.

Armenia: The religion of Urartu was polytheistic. Local people worshiped the forces of nature such as wood as a symbol of life.

During the Achaemenid Empire, under the impact of Persian culture, *Zoroastrianism* began to spread in the region.

The Armenian cross-stones (*khachkars*) carry a fiery Zoroastrian sun-circle beneath the cross.



Azerbaijan: Polytheistic idolatry, fire-worshipping, Zoroastrianism and polytheism all existed until Islam arrived in Azerbaijan.

Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism lasted from the 6th century BCE to the 7th century AD. Atropatena became the center of Zoroastrianism. One Zoroastrian temple has been found in Ganzak, the capital of Atropatena.

North Caucasus:

Chechnya: The Vainakh people practiced a mix of animism, totemism, paganism and, later, Zoroastrianism. Animism is the most ancient religion, dating back to the Palaeolithic Age. The Vainakh practiced clan totemism where the clan was identified with a natural object.

Paganism: The paganism in the Vainakh society was a mixture of animism, totemism and polytheism that dated back to the Neolithic Age. Paganism lasted until the 16th century.

Discussion/Questions

- 1- Does Caucasian Christianity still carry traces of Zoroastrianism?
- 2-What would motivate a people to abandon their ancestral beliefs and adopt a foreign religion?

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