

RUSSIAN EMBASSIES  
TO THE GEORGIAN  
KINGS, 1589–1605,  
VOLUME I

W.E.D. Allen



THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

# Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings, 1589–1605

Volume I

Edited by  
W.E.D. ALLEN

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GEORGIAN KINGS

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*Thani*



*Mani*



*Tsani*



*Jani*

Illuminated capital letters from a MS. of Saba Sulkhani Orbeliani's Dictionary of the Georgian Language for Mzedchabuk Orbeliani, the Judge of Atsqviri (Atskhur) in 1724.

RUSSIAN EMBASSIES  
TO THE  
GEORGIAN KINGS  
(1589 - 1605)

VOLUME I

Edited with Introduction, Additional Notes, Commentaries  
and Bibliography by

W. E. D. ALLEN

Texts translated by

ANTHONY MANGO



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## FOREWORD

HAKLUYT gave the first account of the English part in the spread of the maritime peoples of the West across the oceans of the world at the turn of the fifteenth century. During the same period events of comparable consequence were taking place on a continental scale in eastern Europe and northern Eurasia. The capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 presaged an effort to restore that geographical unity of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern lands which had taken form in earlier state structures: the Byzantine, Roman and Hellenistic empires. Again, the traditional connections of the Ottoman Turks with inner Asia and their identification with the *mystique* of the Islamic world revived the Arabian concept of latitudinal expansion eastward beyond the Caspian to Bukhara and central Asia and westward as far as Morocco and the coast of the Atlantic. In northern Eurasia, the emergence of the Muscovite Grand Dukedom as the successor state to the Mongol Golden Horde on the Volga soon became a challenge to the Ottoman empire all along the northern flank of the sphere of Turkish influence from the Dniepr and the Don, draining to the Black Sea – beyond to the Caspian, to the Ulu-tau *massif* and to the headwaters of the West Siberian rivers, draining to the Arctic Ocean.

The basis of this Russian expansion was 'fluvial' – down the rivers flowing to the Black Sea and the Caspian and, later, along the Siberian rivers. The decisive events in the first phase of expansion were the overthrow of the Tartar khanates of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1554) and the projection of Russian power in a longitudinal direction: on the axis – White Sea – Caspian – Iran. It is notable that this policy was encouraged by Elizabethan England whose merchants were active

## FOREWORD

as advisers, explorers and, even, planners at the court of Ivan IV. Again, the Russian drive south proved welcome enough to the Safavid rulers of Persia who were harassed from the west and from the north-east by pressures from the Ottoman Turks in the west and from the Uzbek Turks in central Asia. A major clash between the Ottoman empire and the Muscovite state became inevitable. The main lines of latitudinal and longitudinal expansion crossed in the region stretching from the Crimea along the north Caucasian steppe to Astrakhan and the Volga basin. The nodal point was indeed, perhaps, Besh-tau, 'the five mountains' (*R. Pyatigorye*), commanding the ways west to the Crimea, north-east to Astrakhan, south-east along the Caspian coast to Shirvan and Persia, and due south through the Terek gorge to the Georgian lands. In the five mountains, the Khans of the Golden Horde had kept camp and court and in that region Tokhtamysh had challenged Tamerlane. During the sixteenth century the Circassian princes of Great Kabarda had become established there. They attracted the alliance of Ivan IV in the years before the first big Russo-Turkish war broke out (1569-70); and it was they who introduced the Georgian kings of Kakheti into the ken of the Muscovite Chancery.

South of the main chain of the Caucasus, the Georgians had been the victims of the power politics of the Ottoman and Safavid empires during the three earlier quarters of the sixteenth century. With the approach of the Russians to the northern Caucasus, the struggle for military control and diplomatic influence over the whole of the Caucasian isthmus became triangular – or even quadrangular – since the Khans of the Giray dynasty in the Crimea, although vassals of the Porte, frequently pursued their own policies.

In Southern Caucasia, since the middle of the fifteenth century, the rather loosely knit Kingdom of Georgia (*G. Sakartvelos samepo*) had disintegrated as the result of varied

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trends and circumstances. The Black Death, the prolonged wars of resistance against Tamerlane at the turn of the fourteenth century and, finally, the fall of Constantinople and the subsequent elimination by the Turks of the 'factories' of the Italian trading cities which sustained the economic life of the Black Sea countries all the way round from the mouths of the Danube to the Crimea and Circassia – all these factors had contributed to the decay of the brilliant monarchy of the Georgian Middle Ages. There had emerged as successor states three small kingdoms: Kartli (central Georgia), Kakheti (eastern Georgia) and Imereti (western Georgia); and four smaller principalities in the west: Samtskhe or Saatabago, Guria, Mingrelia and Abkhazia; Russian interest was naturally drawn to these survivors of the world of Orthodox Christianity round the Black Sea. During the four decades – 1564–1605 – no less than seventeen embassies were exchanged between the Russian tsars and the Georgian kings ruling in Kakheti; the last, in 1604–5, also visited the Kartlian king.

The records of these embassies survived in part in the archives of the Russian state. They were first examined in detail by Marie-Félicité Brosset, the eminent French scholar who became the pioneer of Georgian studies in Russia during the reign of Tsar Nicholas I in the mid-nineteenth century. Brosset published his 'Examen Critique' of the records of the embassies in *Bulletin de la classe des sciences historiques, philologiques et politiques de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Petersbourg*, tomes I and II, 1844–5. Brosset made valuable comparisons with contemporary Georgian, Armenian, Persian and Turkish sources and this work should be read in conjunction with his other weighty volumes – to which reference is made in the following Introduction and Bibliography.

Forty years later, S. A. Belokurov published the Russian texts covering the period 1578–1613 in *Russian relations*

## FOREWORD

*with the Caucasus (Snosheniya Rossii s Kavkazom)*, Moscow, 1889. Further details on Belokurov and his work are cited in the Bibliography. Although frequently noted by modern Soviet historians, this volume has become extremely rare in western Europe. The copy catalogued in the Library of the British Museum seems to have been mislaid; the one from which the following translations have been made was found by the editor in a bookshop in Tiflis in 1926.

The texts published by Belokurov are often laborious reading since they are compiled in the 'officialese' of the Russian Chancery of the sixteenth century. The writers are repetitive, unimaginative and preoccupied often with the detail of diplomatic protocol and the *minutiae* of religious controversy within the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless they illumine the Russian mind of the period and, in their matter-of-fact way, reflect the particulars of Russian daily life and administrative practice. Again, they are of value in giving an intimate picture of life and custom among the peoples of the northern and central Caucasus and in Georgia – which is not available for the period in any other source.

The geographical interest of the texts is considerable; they give the first extant accounts of the crossing of the main chain of the Caucasus from north to south and many details of the geography of Kakheti and Kartli.

The documents relating to the embassies of Zvenigorodski and Antonov (1589–90) and of Tatishchev and Ivanov (1604–1605) have been selected for translation as giving the most detailed observations on topography and ethnology, as well as for their patches of dramatic narrative: the murder of the Kakhian king Alexander II; and the secret negotiations for the marriages of the son and daughter of Tsar Boris Godunov with members of the Kartlian Royal House. The account of the embassy of Sovin and Polukhanov (1596–9) duplicates many of the details of the earlier and later embassies; but some

## FOREWORD

extracts which illustrate conditions of life in Caucasia have been included in Volume II.

In the translation an attempt has been made to preserve the flavour and style of the *Prikaznoy yazyk* even where stilted and archaic English had to be used to achieve this purpose. On the other hand, it was decided to omit repetitive passages as well as excessively long accounts of negotiations on matters of very minor importance which merely impeded the flow of the narrative. All omissions are indicated by dots (. . .); the length of omissions can be judged by reference to the pages of Belokurov's text which are given in the margin.

The documents are written without regard to the rules of *oratio obliqua*, the past and the present tenses being used indiscriminately. The tense of the original has been retained wherever this did not conflict too openly with English usage; a device for this purpose, where possible, has been to place passages in the present tense inside quotation marks.

Belokurov's text required very few emendations: all of them are indicated in the footnotes.

To explain the texts, particularly in their geographical and ethnological detail, it has proved necessary to add footnotes. These have been kept as short as possible. Where it has seemed of interest to expand a theme beyond the scope of the footnote, the material has been relegated to the Commentaries which form a major part of this work. The editor is responsible for the Commentaries which are not initialled. Contributions by the translator are indicated by the initials AM. Where a Commentary is the joint work of the editor and the translator, the fact is indicated by the initials WEDA/AM, or, alternately, AM/WEDA depending upon who did most of the work.

In the footnotes and in the Commentaries, the editor has drawn often on the *Geographical description of Georgia*, prepared in the first decades of the eighteenth century by the great Georgian historian and geographer, Prince Wakhusht

## FOREWORD

Bagration. While Wakhusht's manuscript maps were the basis of the *Carte générale de la Géorgie et de l'Arménie* published by the French geographer J.-N. Delisle in Paris, 1768, the *Description* remained in manuscript until M.-F. Brosset edited the Georgian text with a French translation for the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences in 1842. Wakhusht's *Description* is a late example of the oriental school of geographical exposition as exemplified by the Turks Evliya Chelebi and Katib Chelebi in the preceding century, but it is well to recall that the prince lived for many years in Moscow and the influence is evident of the 'Statistical Accounts' of different countries which were current in Europe during the eighteenth century. The *Description* of the learned Georgian forms the link between the crude handbook which is the Book of the Great Map and the sophisticated Caucasian studies of the eighteenth century by soldiers like Gärber and Steder or the adventurer Reineggs, and trained Academicians, like Gùldenstädt, Gmelin and Pallas.

Wakhusht is the basic classic for the study of Caucasian historical geography and for this reason the editor has thought fit to reproduce L. I. Maruashvili's comparatively recent appreciation which appeared in *Voprosy Geografii*, Vol. 31, 1953, see below, Vol. II, pp. 573-86.

Volume II contains also Commentaries on the Archival Sources and on the Book of the Great Map (*Kniga glagolemaya Bolshoy Chertezh*), which is frequently cited in the footnotes and Commentaries. The first manuscripts of this work date from the middle of the seventeenth century and no original of the map described has survived. In 1840 a text, itself now rare, was edited by G. I. Spasski for the Society of Russian History and Antiquities. It is apparent that the sections relating to Caucasia were based on the reports of the earlier Russian missions.

Some genealogical tables are given at the end of Volume II in order to clarify the complicated relationship of the Caucasian

## FOREWORD

royal and princely families and their connections with the Russian, Ottoman and Persian ruling houses.

It had been the intention of the editor to add a critical bibliography with biographical notes on some of the earlier travellers in the Caucasus to whom reference is made in the notes and Commentaries; but limitations of time and space have made it necessary to restrict this section.

A wealth of illustration has been available in contemporary maps and miniatures which have not so far been edited in English. It has only been possible to publish a small selection of these. The miniatures of Asafi and the numerous drawings of Castelli – who was a near contemporary of the events described – really merit treatment in separate works.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE genesis of this book dates back over forty years when, in the month of June 1926, I first acquired from a street bookstall in old Tbilisi (Tiflis) a copy of Belokurov's rare volume on 'The relations of Russia with the Caucasus'. It was in 1955 that Anthony Mango undertook to translate the documents covering the embassies of Zvenigorodski and Tatishchev. My own contribution was to edit the texts in the context of the contemporary scene and to try to elucidate the topographical and social background of the events described. Soon after completing the translation Mango joined the staff of the UN in New York. He continued to provide some items for the Commentaries and footnotes and began the preparation of an index but it was not his fault that the vicissitudes and diversions of my own life delayed completion of the work for twelve years.

This delay was in one respect fortunate since an invitation to attend the 800th Jubilee of the poet Shota Rustaveli in Tbilisi in September 1966 enabled me to renew contact with Georgian scholars and learned institutions after an interval of forty years. A second invitation in the summer of 1967 allowed me to spend some weeks in the countryside of Kakheti and Kartli and to see many of the places mentioned in the texts.

In 1966 (in company with Sir Harold Bailey who was the guest of learned bodies in the Autonomous SSR of Northern Osetia and in the Autonomous District of Southern Osetia) I was able to make the traverse both ways of the Georgian Military Road under the guidance of the Osetian scholar and lexicographer, Professor Abayev, himself born in Kobi near the headwaters of the Terek.

In 1967 I repeated the journey accompanied by my nephew Robin Allen. On this second journey, it would be

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difficult to name all the officials and Party Chairmen, town mayors and museum curators who combined kindness with gargantuan hospitality in the country towns of Georgia. But I was particularly indebted for encouragement and help to Academician Irakli Abashidze, the distinguished poet who was then Chairman of the Georgian Writers' Union; to Mr Zhghenti, Secretary of the Georgian Society for Friendship with Foreign Countries; to Academician George Tsereteli, Professor of Semitic Studies at the University of Tbilisi; and to Academician Shalva Amiranashvili, the Director of the State Museum of Art in Tbilisi and brilliant interpreter of the history of Georgian art. Not least, Mr Gela Charkviani, Reader in English at the University of Tbilisi, by his notable efficiency and invariable good humour, made sometimes arduous travelling conditions into an enjoyable adventure.

Versions of a few of my Commentaries were published as papers in *Bedi Kartlisa* and in *Oxford Slavonic Papers*. In this connection I am obliged to Dr K. Salia, editor of *Bedi Kartlisa*, for giving me the opportunity of offering preliminary material for the consideration of Georgian scholars.

Comment and advice on specific problems came generously from the late Professor Vladimir Minorsky; from Professor Emeritus George Vernadsky of Yale; from Professor Cyril Toumanoff of Georgetown; from Dr Laurence Lockhart; and from Professor Charles Beckingham.

During my years in Turkey I learned much about the history of the Crimean Tartars and the Nogays from Professor A. Z. V. Togan of Istanbul University and from Professors Halil Inalcik and A. N. Kurat of Ankara University. I am indebted to Dr V. L. Ménage for his kindness in summarizing Asafi from the original manuscript in Istanbul University Library; and to Mrs Mellaart for procuring for me coloured slides and photographs of the miniatures. Mr Andro Gugushvili, who for almost half a century has tutored the small band of enthusiasts

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for Georgian studies in England, made some translations from Georgian and read through the Commentaries. Professor D. M. Lang was generous with gifts and loans of books and some sapient advice, though he does not necessarily agree with all my etymologies. Mr Humphrey Higgins read through the completed work and contributed to the preparation of the Bibliography. Major Evan Ralphs gave useful help in summarizing some Russian sources. And Miss Anne Pentland re-drew the maps from my almost illegible drafts.

The Director of the Gosudarstvenny Istoricheski Muzei in Moscow courteously provided the photographs of the miniatures reproduced in Plates 4 and 5; and Hero of the Soviet Union Professor Irakli Tsitsishvili (through Professor Lang) the views reproduced in Plates 8 and 9. The Director of Istanbul University Library kindly gave facilities for the photographing of the miniatures in Asafi's MS. And, nearly forty years ago, the Librarian of the Biblioteca Nazionale in Palermo allowed me to photograph a number of drawings by the Theatine Father Cristoforo Castelli – undoubtedly the most vivid surviving record of life in Georgia during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Two successive Honorary Secretaries of the Society, Mr R. A. Skelton and Dr Terence Armstrong, amongst their manifold activities, have shown restraint and patience over the delays in the completion of this work and have given valuable editorial advice.

Lastly, Anthony Mango and I would like to recall the enthusiastic help and encouragement of my late wife, Nathalie Maximovna (Natasha) Allen. Her familiarity with old Muscovite and Cossack lore and her excellent knowledge of the nuances of the English language made her a perfectionist in the interpretation of difficult points. Well do I remember her pertinacious hunts through the formidable dictionaries of Old Church Slavonic, of Sreznevski and of Dahl. Flaws that

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remain either in the texts or in the Commentaries must be attributed to the loss of her collaboration and to the flagging abilities of the editor.

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14 June 1967

## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND ON THE SPELLING OF PROPER NAMES

IN the transliteration of geographical and personal names, the general principles in the Guide for Editors of the Hakluyt Society's Publications have been followed. These are based on the RGS System II, as revised by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use (PCGN). But as M. Aurousseau, the editor of the 1942 edition, observed 'there are at least ten systems for the transliteration of Russian in use in Great Britain and the United States' – apart from the systems used by the Russians themselves, the French, Germans, Italians, Turks and others. Further, Russian, Caucasian and continental scholars (including M. Dumézil, the greatest living authority on Caucasian dialects) have worked out complicated special alphabets – sometimes incomprehensible to the layman – for rendering sounds peculiar to the different languages of Caucasia. Again, the latinization of Turkish presents some special problems since the systems evolved in the Turkish Republic and in Azerbaijan and other Turkic-speaking republics of the USSR differ in many details.

In transliterating Russian names we have tried to give the non-specialist reader an approximate rendering of the way in which the word is pronounced in Russian, without the need for diacritical marks or other artificial conventions. The only points that need be noted are as follows:

The letter *g* is to be pronounced as in *get*; the letter *u* corresponds to the sound of *oo* in *boot*; the combination *zh* is pronounced as *s* in *pleasure*. The Russian short *i* (which always follows another vowel) has been rendered as *y* pronounced as in *yes*. Somewhat artificially, *y* has also been used for Russian back *i*, which always follows a consonant and which does not

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occur in English. In terminations where the short *i* follows an ordinary *i*, the former has not been transliterated (e.g. Zvenigorodski, instead of Zvenigorodskiy); this is a departure from normal non-specialist practice which traditionally employs the letter *y* to render the Russian phoneme. Final *y* has been retained for the combination back *i* followed by short *i*. The English letter *y* (to be pronounced as in *yes*) has also been used in rendering Russian words in which a soft consonant is followed by a vowel or a vowel is followed by the Russian letter *e*; where, however, the Russian *e* is initial or follows a consonant, it has been rendered as *e* (though this is not strictly correct phonetically).

In the transliteration of Georgian names the general principles adopted by the editors of *Georgica* have been followed (see articles by A. Gugushvili, 'The Georgian Alphabet', *Georgica*, Vol. 1, No. 1, and 'Classification of Georgian Sounds', Vol. 1, Nos. 2 and 3). For simplicity, in a work which has no pretensions to being philological, diacritical marks have been omitted (e.g. Kartli for K'art'li, Mtiuleti for Mt'iulet'i). For Georgian place-names the Georgian form has been used in preference to the Russianized form (e.g. Kakheti and not Kakhetia, which should, if anything, be Kakhia; Kartli and not Kartalinia). On the other hand, Mingrelia, so familiar to sixteenth-century Europeans, has been preferred to Georgian Samegrelo.

In the case of Russian versions of Georgian names (e.g. Yuri for Giorgi), the Russian version has been retained in the original text, and the Georgian form has been used in the footnotes and Commentaries.

The refinements of the Georgian alphabet of forty letters themselves present many difficulties. For instance, the river Chorokhi may be transliterated as Dchorokhi, Tchorokhi or (in Turkish form) Çoruh. The word for 'river' can be rendered *tsqali*, *tskali*, *dʒqali*, *dskali*. For convenience I have

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adhered to the spellings used in my *History of the Georgian People* (1932) – which correspond generally to the tables formulated by A. Gugushvili (1937). Briefly, I have ignored the refinements of Georgian ejaculatory and expletive sounds – using *ch* to represent *dch*, *tch*; *tsq* to represent *tsk*, *dzq*, etc. *J* has been used to represent *dzh* as in Janashvili, but in transliterating the titles of works in Russian I have retained the Russian *dzh*, i.e. Dzhnanashvili. The differing forms are equated in the index.

In the case of Georgian proper names, the laws of euphony in the Georgian language provide that all proper names terminate in a vowel, thus: King Wakhtang – *Mepe Wakhtangi*, but Wakhtang the King – *Wakhtang Mepe*; King David – *Mepe Daviti*, but David the Second – *Davit Meore*. In transliterating Georgian proper names into English, I have dropped the terminal *i* (e.g. Wakhtang, Wakhusht, Manuchar), but in the case of a few names such as Giorgi and Dmitri I have retained the terminal *i* for obvious reasons of euphony. In the case of certain Georgian names, such as Daviti (David), Aleksandre (Alexander), Swimoni (Simon), Kostantine (Constantine), I have adopted the English forms; on the other hand, I have retained Georgian forms as in Giorgi (George) and Ioanne (John). There is, of course, a precedent to follow in this matter as, for instance, the use in English books of the Russian Ivan for John, Fedor for Theodore, but of Peter and Paul instead of Petr and Pavel. In Russian names, notably those combined with patronymics, I have used the Russian transcription, as in Aleksey Mikhaylovich (not Alexis Michaelovich).

A major difficulty lies in the use of Arabic names in Turkish, Persian and Russian. In the sixteenth century the Turks and Persians used Arabic names written exactly as in Arabic but pronounced differently and usually, though not always, transliterated differently in western writing. Thus, in Turkish the

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Arabic name Muhammad is pronounced, and nowadays written, as Mehmet. Some older western writers preferred to write it as Mahomet, or Mohamed. Russian writers use Magomet or Mukhamed. In the present work Muhammad has been preferred for Persians and Central Asians under Persian cultural influence, and Mehmet for Ottoman Turks and Crimean Tartars within the Ottoman sphere. Other spellings occur in the titles of western works under reference and have been retained in their contexts.

Some familiar geographical names have been kept in their anglicized forms (e.g. Tiflis, not *G. Tbilisi*;<sup>1</sup> Trebizond, not *T. Trabzon*). Except in commonly accepted forms (e.g. Iraq), the rendering of the Arabic *qaf* by *q* has been abandoned in favour of the Turkish *k* (e.g. Kars, not Qars, Kazvin, not Qazvin).

The very nature of the problem makes inconsistencies unavoidable, but these are probably preferable to unfamiliar spellings which would result from too close adherence to scientific systems of transliteration devised for special purposes such as library catalogues.

<sup>1</sup> The Georgian form *Tbilisi* has been followed in citing post-1917 names of institutions and books.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Akty</i>	<i>Akty sobranniye Kavkazskoyu Arkheograficheskoyu Kommissiyeyu.</i>
<i>BK</i>	<i>Bedi Kartlisa.</i>
<i>BSE</i>	<i>Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya.</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.</i>
<i>BTTK</i>	<i>Belleten, Türk Tarih Kurumu.</i>
<i>BU</i>	<i>Biographie Universelle.</i>
<i>CHOID</i>	<i>Chteniya v Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostey.</i>
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography.</i>
<i>DRV</i>	<i>Drevnyaya Rossiyskaya V'ivliofika.</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam.</i>
<i>EVT</i>	<i>Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia.</i>
<i>GOPMK</i>	<i>Gosudarstvennaya Oruzheynaya Palata Moskovskogo Kremlya.</i>
<i>IA</i>	<i>Islam Ansiklopedisi.</i>
<i>IM</i>	<i>Imago Mundi.</i>
<i>IZ</i>	<i>Istoricheskiye Zapiski.</i>
<i>Iz Gos</i>	<i>Izvestiya Gosudarstvennoy Akademii Istorii Materialnoy Kultury.</i>
<i>Iz IMK</i>	<i>Izvestiya Istorii Materialnoy Kultury.</i>
<i>Iz Kav</i>	<i>Izvestiya Kavkazskago Otdela Imperatorskago Geograficheskago Obshchestva.</i>
<i>Iz RAN</i>	<i>Izvestiya Rossiyskoy Akademii Nauk.</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society.</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.</i>
<i>Kav Kal</i>	<i>Kavkazski Kalendar.</i>
<i>Kav Sbor</i>	<i>Kavkazski Sbornik.</i>
<i>KBCh</i>	<i>Kniga glagolemaya Bolshoy Chertezh.</i>

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<i>KRO</i>	<i>Kabardino-Ruskiye Otnosheniya.</i>
<i>MAK</i>	<i>Materialy po Arkheologii Kavkaza.</i>
<i>NED</i>	<i>New English Dictionary.</i>
<i>OI</i>	<i>Ocherki Istorii SSSR.</i>
<i>OID</i>	<i>Ocherki Istorii Dagestana.</i>
<i>OSP</i>	<i>Oxford Slavonic Papers.</i>
<i>RBS</i>	<i>Russki Biograficheski Slovar.</i>
<i>SMK</i>	<i>Sbornik Materialov dlya Opisaniya Mestnostey i Plemen Kavkaza.</i>
<i>SPA</i>	<i>A Survey of Persian Art.</i>
<i>SSKG</i>	<i>Sbornik svedeniy o Kavkazskikh Gortsakh.</i>
<i>SSTO</i>	<i>Sbornik svedeniy o Terskoy Oblasti.</i>
<i>TVOIAO</i>	<i>Trudy Vostochnago Otdeleniya Imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obshchestva.</i>
<i>TVP</i>	<i>Travels of Venetians in Persia.</i>
<i>VDI</i>	<i>Vestnik Drevney Istorii.</i>
<i>ZKO</i>	<i>Zapiski Kavkazskago Otdeleniya Imperatorskago Russkago Geograficheskago Obshchestva.</i>
<i>ZKV</i>	<i>Zapiski Kollegii Vostokovedov.</i>
<i>ZVO</i>	<i>Zapiski Vostochnago Otdeleniya Imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obshchestva.</i>

(For fuller details of these publications see Bibliography at end of Vol. II.

For abbreviations of book titles see under authors' names in Bibliography.)

# INTRODUCTION

## I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The capture of Astrakhan by the Russians in 1554 gave them effective control of the whole course of the Volga and potential command of the Caspian Sea (where the Safavid régime in Iran never maintained fighting ships). As George Vernadsky has observed, 'from a geopolitical point of view Ivan IV's dash down the Volga to Astrakhan was an important move since it cut the steppe zone into two sectors, each of which could be taken care of separately'.

Complex causes had led to this latest achievement of the rulers of Muscovy; but political and military events had accelerated the process: not least the divisions within the Hordes – Golden, Blue and Nogay – and the long wars between Tamerlane and Tokhtamysh, the last great ruler of the Golden Horde which had controlled the middle Volga until the end of the fourteenth century and dominated the separate Russian dukedoms. The Muscovites, with an agricultural economy feeding urban centres based on a network of rivers, were beginning to fill the vacuum created by the decline of the pastoral and mercantile life of the Hordes. The new Russian ascendancy on the middle Volga had attracted much of the central Asian trade, through Kazan, to Nizhni-Novgorod and Moscow. Their further establishment in Astrakhan tended to divert along the Volga the trans-Caspian trade which had formerly gone through Tana (Azov) to the Black Sea ports. Again, there were soon complaints to be heard in Bukhara and Istanbul that the Russians were obstructing the pilgrim traffic which passed from central Asia through the Black Sea ports to the Bosphorus and thence to the Holy Cities of Arabia. The prestige of the Sultan

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as Caliph was seriously involved in this issue. In Iran, the Safavid dynasty – sponsors and protectors of the Shi'a heresy in Islam – were also blocking the transit of Sunni pilgrims from central Asia through Meshed; there were many protests about the arrests, pillage and ill-treatment of pilgrims. And beyond the theological and dynastic rivalries of the Ottomans and the Safavids, was the important economic issue of the control of east Caucasian silk production – the distribution of which was centred in Shemakha – and the rich traffic in rugs and other fabrics which was concentrated in the flourishing city of Tabriz. The Russian control of Astrakhan and the development of the Volga route through Muscovy to Poland and the Baltic offered an attractive alternative to the Persians who were otherwise dependent on the Gulf ports controlled by the Portuguese or on the routes to Aleppo or Trebizond which were in Turkish hands. Beginning with Anthony Jenkinson, the English merchants of the Muscovy Company sponsored and encouraged political accord and trade between the Persians and the Muscovites.<sup>1</sup>

The Ottoman empire then just passing the maximum stretch of its power in the last decades of Sulaiman the Magnificent, was not slow to intervene to shore up the remnants of nomad Turkish power which had spread over the great steppelands round the northern shores of the Black Sea and the Caspian. The Tartar dynasty of Giray, descendants of Chingiz Khan established in the Crimea, were their principal allies. On the whole, the military situation of the Ottomans was stronger than that of the Muscovites. As Karl Marx has observed, 'the Ottoman empire was the only truly military power of the

<sup>1</sup> For background of these events and recent literature in Russian and Turkish see W. E. D. Allen, *Problems of Turkish power in the sixteenth century*, London, 1963, pp. 15 ff. (Allen, *PTP*). For Jenkinson and other Englishmen in Russia, see *Early voyages and travels to Russia and Persia by Anthony Jenkinson and other Englishmen*, edited by E. Delmar Morgan and C. H. Coote (*EVT*), Hakluyt Society, London, 1886, in 2 vols., *passim*.

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middle ages'.<sup>1</sup> Their artillery was the most advanced in Europe and their corps of trained professional soldiers, the janissaries, had a formidable impact on the still knightly levies of the Polish and Hungarian kingdoms. The Turkish commanders were recruited from these trained professionals and were generally more capable than the amateurish Polish and Hungarian magnates; or the Russian *boyars*, often selected for command according to their seniority in the hierarchy of the Muscovite nobility; or the chieftains of the great Turkoman tribes who commanded Persian armies in the field.<sup>2</sup> The Ottomans controlled the Black Sea and had a complete naval ascendancy which enabled them to deny the Russians access to the mouths of the steppeland rivers: Bug, Dniestr, Dniepr, Don. (Only the Cossacks, in their light *chaykas*, had the enterprise from time to time to challenge single Ottoman war vessels and to harass Turkish merchant shipping.)<sup>3</sup> Through the Crimean

<sup>1</sup> Marx cited from *Arkhiv Marksa i Engelsa*, Vol. VI, Moskva, 1939, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> It was only in 1550 that Ivan IV formed his first trained and regularly paid regiments of *streltsy* (lit., 'archers' who later became musketeers); and it was not until the end of the century that Shah Abbas I established his corps of *tufanjis* ('musketeers'). Even after the disastrous wars of the middle of the seventeenth century, the Polish magnates refused to allow their kings to maintain regular troops. When war broke out, the kings remained dependent on the goodwill of the magnates in bringing their own levies into the field and on German mercenaries – hastily hired.

<sup>3</sup> The best near-contemporary description of the Cossacks is to be found in the rare work of Le Sieur de Beauplan, *Description d'Ukraine, qui sont plusieurs Provinces du Royaume de Pologne. Contenuës depuis les confins de la Moscovie iusques aux limites de la Transylvanie. Ensemble leurs moeurs, façons de vivre & de faire la guerre*, Rouen, 1660 – together with a folding map which is the first good detailed delineation of the Ukrainian lands. For curious particulars of Cossack attacks on Sinope and Trebizond early in the seventeenth century, of their presence in Mingrelia and of their despatch of an envoy to Shah Abbas, see *Voyages de Pietro Della Valle, gentilhomme romain, Dans la Turquie . . . la Perse*, etc., Rouen edition of 1745, Vol. 3, pp. 264–9, 363–4, 429. The word *chayka* means 'gull' in Russian: Dahl, *Tolkovy slovar*. It has been identified, doubtfully, with Osmanli Turkish, *shaika*, 'boat', Vasmer, *Russisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 3 vols., Heidelberg, 1953–8, Vol. 3 (Vasmer, *REW*).

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khans, the Ottomans could dispose of thousands of irregular cavalry: during campaigns these hardy bandits were accustomed to live off the country they were pillaging; their staple diet was *shashlyk*, gobbets of meat roasted over the cinders on the points of their *kinzhals*,<sup>1</sup> and *kumys* (mare's milk). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in some of their big raids, the Crim Tartars reached the suburbs of Moscow (1570), Cracow (1648) and Vienna (last in 1683). On their retreats, they would drive before them tens of thousands of prisoners, peasantry and townsfolk (and nobles when they could catch them) for sale in the slave markets of the Crimea. (Khürrem Sultan, the favourite wife of Sulaiman the Magnificent and the mother of Sultan Selim II, the daughter of a Ukrainian priest, was a captive of one of these raids). To the east of the Black Sea, the Tartar cavalry of the Giray khans could be brought into action against the Russians in the steppes between the Don and the Volga. They harassed, and sometimes allied with, the Circassian tribes of the western Caucasus and the valley of the Kuban. During the long Ottoman wars against the Safavid monarchy in Persia, the Turks brought the Crim Tartars into action in Daghestan and Shirvan where they proved equal to the Turkoman cavalry of the Shahs. In the northern Caucasus the diagonal of the marches of the Crim Tartars from the Taman peninsula to the Koysu and the Shevkal's capital at Tarku crossed the line of Russian communications from Astrakhan to the Terek and the Daryal Pass into Georgia; and their goings and comings were a subject of recur-

<sup>1</sup> *kinzhal*: the long straight double edged dirk, grooved and tapering to a fine point, carried by a variety of peoples of the Eurasian steppes and the mountain zone of the Middle East. The *kinzhal* was worn on a thin leather strap across the left groin and was used for a stabbing thrust with an upward movement of the right hand. These weapons, still carried in the Caucasus, do not differ at all from specimens found in Luristan graves and dated to the beginning of the first millennium B.C. The origin of the word is obscure, as there are many varieties (*hanzhar*, etc.) among Turkic-speaking peoples and among the tribes of the Caucasus, cf. Vasmer, *REW*.

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rent conflict and dispute between the Muscovite Chancery and the Ottoman Porte during the three decades between 1570 and 1605.<sup>1</sup> (The Muscovites and the Ottomans, equally, repudiated responsibility for the warlike activities of the Don and Terek Cossacks and the Crim Tartars.)

The struggle between the Russians and the Turks for control of the Pontic and Caspian basins was long and of epic proportions. Until the middle of the eighteenth century the Volga remained the only great southward flowing river over which the Russians had the mastery. Two centuries were to pass before the Russians really established themselves in the Crimea and secured permanent possession of the great fortresses commanding the outlets to the Black Sea – Akkerman, Kinburn, Ochakov and Azov (*T. Azak*.)

During the five decades which followed the Russian capture of Astrakhan in 1554, the policy of the Ottoman sultans and the Crimean khans was directed to reconstituting the belt of Turkish states along the Volga and setting a check to Russian penetration south round the shore of the Caspian and southwestward along the line of the Terek into Georgia. This was the explanation of the Don–Volga canal project, inspired by the Circassian Kasim Pasha, and sponsored by Mehmet Sokollu, perhaps the greatest of Ottoman Grand Viziers. In the autumn of 1569, Kasim Pasha laid siege to Astrakhan, when Banister and Duckett of the English Muscovy Company were held up there for some weeks. In 1570 Devlet Giray made his great cavalry drive against Moscow and burned much of the timber-built capital of Ivan IV.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the failure of Mehmet Sokollu's 'grand design', the hold of the Muscovites

<sup>1</sup> Good near-contemporary descriptions of the way of life of the Tartars and their military tactics are given by Beauplan and by the Turkish travellers Asafi and Evliya Chelebi who actually campaigned with them.

<sup>2</sup> For summary of these campaigns, citing contemporary sources, see Allen, *PTP*, pp. 22–9.

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on the Volga estuary remained in doubt for two decades, and convoys down the river were always subject to attack by the Nogays and wild bands of Circassian and Cossack outlaws. Nevertheless, the situation gradually became more stable; in 1582 the Russians built a stone wall round their new settlement at Astrakhan; and in 1589, the year when Prince Semen Zvenigorodski passed through on his embassy to King Alexander of Kakheti, the construction of a fortress was finished. The majority in the new city were Russians, but there grew up large Armenian and Tartar suburbs; and many Persian and Indian – and some few Georgian and even Chinese – merchants settled there.<sup>1</sup>

Yet for a century and a half, until the campaign of Peter the Great in 1722, Russian progress in the Caspian basin was remarkably slow. In the northern Caucasus, at first, they enjoyed the support of the princes of Greater Kabarda; and south of the main range, the kings of Kakheti – notably Alexander II and, later, Taymuraz I – were pressing for a policy of consistent support against the Shevkal, and against the Turks and Persians. Until Peter the Great embarked on his ambitious enterprises in naval construction which ultimately enabled him to concentrate a formidable and disciplined armament in the Volga estuary – the logistics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries remained a serious handicap to a Russian forward policy in the Caucasus. The technical problems of transport over long distances, of the concentration and conservation of supplies at Astrakhan, and of the forwarding of equipment and materials to the forts along the Terek and the Sunzha, epidemics and defective financial administration – all these factors presented persisting practical difficulties which are recorded in official documents.<sup>2</sup> The same difficulties are to be perceived in

<sup>1</sup> For Astrakhan, see further Commentary 7: 'The towns along the Volga route'.

<sup>2</sup> See further Supplementary Documents, 3: 'Logistics on the Terek'.

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the records of the protracted Ottoman attempt to establish a permanent régime in Shirvan and Daghestan during the two decades which followed the victories of Lala Mustafa Pasha and Özdemiroghlu Osman Pasha in 1578. Troops were often short of supplies; sometimes starving and mutinous. In the winter of 1578-9, in the first year of victory, there were some ten thousand deserters, according to Asafi, the biographer of Özdemiroghlu Osman. 'The troops were very fearful of the winter. Some abandoned their horses and walked. Many of the army died.' Leading personalities proved recalcitrant and insisted on returning to their domains in more agreeable parts of the empire. When replacements arrived, they were found to be often old or sick men.<sup>1</sup>

Regional political units, based on local supplies and popular recruitment, were sometimes able to withstand the armies of distant imperial powers. Alexander, ruler of the small but flourishing Kingdom of Kakheti, could assemble a host of some 10,000 men, and a detachment of 500 trained musketeers, to impress the Russian ambassador Zvenigorodski. Simon of Kartli, in brilliant guerrilla operations, expelled the Ottoman armies from his hereditary territories. The Shevkal could rally some fifteen thousand horsemen from among the Kumyks and Avars and inflicted two disastrous defeats on the Russians.<sup>2</sup>

In the conditions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the tribal elements in Daghestan, reinforced on occasion by trained contingents from Turkey or Persia, proved capable of opposing any Russian progress by the traditional route of invasion along the Caspian foreshore. In the eighteenth century

<sup>1</sup> For Ottoman difficulties in the Caucasus, see Asafi, *Sheja 'atname*, MS. TY 6043 of Istanbul University Library, f. 22 v., ff. (The editor is indebted to Dr. V. L. Ménage for a summary of this work.)

<sup>2</sup> For Alexander's military review, see below, Chap. 4; for Simon of Kartli's guerrilla operations, Allen, *History of the Georgian People*, London, 1932, pp. 177-9 (Allen, *HGP*); for the Shevkal's victory over I. M. Buturlin, see below, Chap. 15.

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the expedition of Peter the Great occupied the Caspian littoral as far as Baku but the Russian invasion petered out in several years to a dreary failure without defeats. The same deficiencies in organization – in supply, transport and, above all, in sanitary measures – which were to cause the dreadful Russian losses at Ochakov and in the Crimea later in the century, ruined the Russian offensive effort in Shirvan, Ghilan and Mazandaran during the years from 1723 to 1732. The effect of these logistic conditions was to freeze the Russian strategic position in Caucasia to the north of the mountains – along the line of the Terek. And the valley of the Terek, forming, as it did, the second, and more difficult, avenue of approach from the Volga basin to southern Caucasia and the Middle East, became the main direction for Russian penetration into Georgia. It is one of the ironies of history that between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Georgian rulers, preoccupied with the continuous pressure from the Avars and other tribes of Daghestan and with the recurrent offensives of Ottoman and Persian armies, actually urged the Muscovite rulers to open up the routes along the Terek and the Avar-koysu with a view to consolidating communications and giving them consistent support against their Muslim neighbours.

### 2. GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The main chain of the Caucasus Mountains has always been the dominant factor in the economy and in the political and military life of the isthmus which separates the Pontic and Caspian basins: the first so 'European', the second so 'central Asian' in natural and cultural characteristics.

The complex ranges of the Caucasus Mountains, stretching some six hundred miles in a general direction north-west to south-east from the Taman peninsula on the Azov Sea to the Apsheron peninsula on the Caspian, is the natural limit of the mountain zone of the Middle East comprising the Iranian and

## GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

the Taurus highlands, themselves a westerly extension of the Himalayan system. The Crimean coastal range is the last westerly outlier of this wide world of mountains.

In the north, the slopes of the main chain of the Caucasus descend to the north Caucasian Steppe. In this direction are 'the five hills' called in Turkish Besh-tau, Russian Pyatigorye, which form a watershed between the Kuma and some westerly feeders of the Terek, all flowing eastward to the Caspian. The steppe in its western part is a projection of the grasslands which are fed by the rivers flowing to the Black Sea. The Kuban, like the Don, belongs essentially to the Pontic river system. The low Stavropol ridge running north to the Manych Depression forms the divide between the western and eastern steppes. Eastward, the North Caucasian Steppe disappears in the sandy flats and littoral swamps stretching to the Volga and forming part of the old bed of the Caspian Sea, an extension of the arid zone of the Aralo-Caspian Depression. This steppe is typical of the desiccated lands which edge the 'great heartland' of inner Asia. In the sixteenth century this north-east Caucasian steppe was inhabited by the Little Horde (*Kishi Ordu*) of Nogay Tartars, who were displaced only in the eighteenth century by the Mongol-speaking Kalmucks.<sup>1</sup>

The main chain of the Caucasus Mountains consists of a series of parallel ridges. These ridges are linked by necks or saddles which give access from north to south of the main chain. The connecting ridges form wide upland glens, often at

<sup>1</sup> The Kalmucks were deported *en masse* by the Soviets in 1943-4, following the German invasion of the northern Caucasus. For an account of these people, see the article by V. Bartold in *Encyclopaedia of Islam (EI)*, 1st ed. The best description of them, before they had passed fully under the influence of the Russians, is to be found in the rare work of Xavier Hommaire de Hell, *Les Steppes de la Mer Caspienne, le Caucase, la Crimée et la Russie Méridionale, voyage pittoresque, historique et scientifique*, Paris and Strasbourg, 1843-5, 3 vols, with folio Atlas, including some coloured plates of Kalmuck life.

## RUSSIAN EMBASSIES

a great elevation. Typical examples are upper Svaneti and the Tush and Khevsur glens in northern Kakheti. Here communities have lived in almost complete isolation during all the known period of history.

The granitic backbone of the Caucasus chain runs as a single wall right across the Caucasian isthmus from sea to sea and separates the basins of the rivers of the northern slope from those of the southern. It thus represents the transverse water divide of Caucasia. The overlapping parallel ranges are all shorter in length than the main chain, but the principal parallel range, called, in Russian, *Bokovoy* (Flanking) is higher than the main chain and gives rise to some of the most notable peaks of the Caucasian system.

The western Caucasus, under the influence of the moist climate of the Black Sea basin, is heavily forested and the snow-line is lower than in the eastern mountains, which come under the desiccating influence of the Aralo-Caspian Depression.

There are more than seventy tracks and paths across the main chain of the Caucasus, some of which are only suitable for pack-transport and others for men marching in single file. In many cases they are blocked by snow for all but two or three months of the year.

The main chain could be by-passed by the sea route along the Circassian coast; but here cliffs and great forested bluffs come down to the sea. No through road along the coast was completed until after the Second World War. Right down to the First World War, Turkish sea-power effectively blocked movement along this coast. In the sixteenth century, all the way from Poti in Imereti to Taman and the Crimean ports, Turkish blockhouses and warships held the Circassian tribes in a network of control; the western Caucasus was quite inaccessible to the Russians who did not then control even the lower estuary of the Don. Equally, the second coastal route along the fore-shore of the Caspian, was controlled at its northern entrant by

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the rather powerful Shevkal of Tarku. Where the foreshore narrowed to a mile or two, the ancient fortress of Derbent within its famous double walls, blocked all movement south. It fell to Peter the Great in 1723; but otherwise remained, alternately, in Turkish or Persian hands until the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, it was losing its commercial ascendancy as the entrepôt for the trade of the western and southern shores of the Caspian to Shemakha and Baku; but, strategically, it retained importance as the opposing base to Russian Astrakhan. The Shevkal, the Turks and the Persians, were all concerned to control Derbent, in Arabic *Bab-al-Abwab*, the Gate of Gates, with its strong walls, its easy access to reinforcement from the mountain tribes, and its fabulous prestige.

Blocked out from the coastal routes, the Russians were forced to develop the most difficult of all, that by the valley of the Terek whose famous gorge bisected the main granitic ridge of the Caucasus from south to north and divided the great chain into two almost equal halves. Thus, from the latter half of the sixteenth century, Russian penetration into Georgia and the Middle Eastern lands beyond, came to be directed along the axis: Volga–Terek.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a convenient general description of the Caucasian chain, see Allen and Muratov, *Caucasian battlefields*, Cambridge, 1953, Chap. 1 (Allen/Muratov, *CB*). Baddeley's *Rugged flanks of Caucasus*, Oxford, 1940, 2 vols. (Baddeley, *RFC*), is a mine of information for the central and eastern Caucasus with acute commentaries on the works of earlier travellers. For some incomparable descriptions of scenery and mountaineering conditions, Freshfield, *The exploration of the Caucasus*, London and New York, 1896, 2 vols., is still outstanding; valuable notes on peaks, passes and approaches in Vol. II, Appendix B. (The author makes a bibliographical error, p. 249, in attributing the authorship of *La Souanétique Libre* to Déchy instead of to R. Bernoville.) For recent Soviet surveys, see N. A. Gvozdetzki, *Fižicheskaya geografiya Kavkaza*, vyp. 1, Moskva, 1954, *Obshchaya chast: Bolshoy Kavkaz*; and Maslov (ed.), *Severny Kavkaz*, Academy of Sciences of USSR, Institute of Geography, Moskva, 1957. For the Volga–Terek route, see the article by W. E. D. Allen, 'The Volga–Terek route in Russo-Caucasian relations' in *Bedi-Kartlisa (BK)*, Vols. xv–xvi (Nos. 43–44), Paris, 1963, pp. 158–66.

## 3. THE TEREK ROUTE THROUGH THE CAUCASUS

Four hundred miles in length, the Terek river has been since ancient times a significant feature in the political and military geography of Caucasia. Its source is from a glacier on the crest of Zilga-khokh on the southern flank of the main ridge of the Caucasus at a height of 2,700 metres. It flows first in a south-easterly direction and then turns north at the village of Kobi and penetrates the main ridge through the celebrated ravine of Daryal to enter the north Caucasian plain a few miles to the south of Vladikavkaz.<sup>1</sup> In its upper course it is an impetuous mountain stream. After Darg-khokh, it receives several large streams flowing from the north-western slopes of Caucasus: Ardon, Cherek, Chegem, Baksan and Malka. The banks become lower and the river widens. After cutting through the Sunzhenski and Terski ridges, the Terek takes a right-angled turn to the east. In its middle course between the junctions of the Malka and the Sunzha, the stream of the Terek broadens with numerous branches interspersed with islands. After the junction with its right-bank tributary, the Sunzha, the Terek flows in a north-easterly direction, becoming deeper and more easily navigable. But it carries along with it a mass of detritus and the bed of the river tends to form banks. After Kargalinskaya *stanitsa*, the Terek divides into a number of channels and falls to the Caspian in a broad delta which is said to extend at the rate of 100 metres a year. Fed by glaciers, snow and rains, and by numerous tributaries, the life of the Terek is unstable and there is a constant struggle against summer floods, particularly in the lower reaches.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vladikavkaz – ‘Lord of the Caucasus’. It was renamed Ordzhonikidze in honour of the well-known Georgian Bolshevik who was liquidated by Stalin during the 1930s. The town has now been accorded the Osetian name of Dzauzhikau.

<sup>2</sup> For the Terek river, cf. article in *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*, (BSE) 1st ed., Vol. 54, pp. 101–2 (all future references to this work are to the 1st ed.). See also Baddeley, *RFC*, *passim*; Gvozdetski,

## THE TEREK ROUTE

From the most ancient times, the Terek valley – like that of the westerly flowing Kuban – seems to have been a focus of human activity. According to Strabo and other classical writers, the gorge at Daryal was fortified in the first century B.C. in the time of the Iberian Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The rich archaeological finds at Koban, north of the gorge, and indications of early mining activities, witness a high cultural development during the Bronze Age. If, as some historians believe, the difficulties of the terrain exclude the likelihood of the Terek valley having been used as a migration route during the period of the movements of the Cimmerians and the Scythians to the south of the Caucasus, infiltrations by small groups through the Daryal and over the higher *cols* of the central Caucasus were probably not uncommon. Indeed, the Huns appeared in Svaneti in the fourth century A.D.; and in the seventh century the Khazars came south to support Emperor Heraclius in an attack on Tiflis, then held for the Sassanids by the Iberian ruler, Stephanos.<sup>2</sup>

The wealth of the Aorsi, recorded by the classical authors, is evidence of prosperity in the north Caucasian steppe during the first century B.C. It is likely that the Aorsi had their centre in the Besh-tau hills; they were the cultural predecessors of the Alanic kingdom of the early Middle Ages. In each period, the people of the steppe round Besh-tau were famous as breeders of horses and cattle and controlled traffic in goods passing north-south along the valleys of the Terek and the Sunzha. The wealth of the Khazar kingdom on the Volga and round the northern shores of the Caspian was derived, at least in part, from the north Caucasian steppe; and, later, in the thirteenth century, when the Mongols had destroyed the Alanic kingdom

Maslov. S. G. Gmelin, *Reise durch Russland* (Gmelin, *Reise*), 4 Parts. Spb. 1784, Part IV, gives the best early account of the natural history of the Terek valley.

<sup>1</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, Loeb ed., Book XI, iii, paras. 5–6.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie (HG)*, Part I, Book 2, pp. 226–7.

(by an attack coming from south of the Caucasus along the Caspian littoral route through Derbent), the region round Besh-tau, between the upper waters of the Kuma and the middle course of the Terek, became a favourite summer camping ground (*yayla*) of the Golden Horde.<sup>1</sup>

Long before the arrival of the Russians in the Volga estuary, the importance of the Terek route was clear to the Italian cartographers of the Caspian in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Italians, particularly the Genoese in Kaffa and Tana and their stations along the Circassian coast, were active in the trans-isthmian traffic as early as the thirteenth century. The Kabardans, according to Dubois de Montpéreau, retained down to the nineteenth century an oral tradition of

<sup>1</sup> For the wealth of the Aorsi, see Strabo, Book XI, v, 8. Also Ellis Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, Cambridge, 1913, p. 107 and *passim*. Minns accepts the identification of the Aorsi with the Yen-ts'ai of the Chinese annals and with the later A-lan-a (Alans).

The latest work on the Khazars by M. I. Artamonov, *Istoriya Khazar*, Leningrad, 1962, emphasises the intimate links of the Khazars with the Caucasus.

In the fourth decade of the fourteenth century Ibn Battuta visited Uzbek Khan of the Golden Horde and describes 'the city of al-Māchar, a large town, on a great river (the Kuma), one of the finest of the cities of the Turks, and possessed of gardens and fruit in abundance'. From al-Māchar (Madzhari), he travelled four days to Bish-dagh (Besh-tau) — where 'there is a hot spring (*R. Kislovodsk*, bitter water) in which the Turks bathe and they claim that anyone who bathes in it will not be attacked by any disease'. From Bish-dagh he returned to the neighbourhood of al-Māchar — where the *mahalla* or *urdu* of Uzbek Khan was expected — 'and we saw a vast city on the move with its inhabitants, with mosques and bazaars in it, the smoke of the kitchens rising in the air (for they cook on the march) and horse-drawn wagons transporting the people. On reaching the camping place they took down the tents from the wagons and set them on the ground, for they are light to carry, and so likewise they did with the mosques and shops', cited from Sir Hamilton Gibb, *The travels of Ibn Battuta*, Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, 1962, Vol. II, pp. 479–82. (On his map, showing Māchar on an unnamed river, Gibb seems to confuse the Kuma — to which he gives a multiple estuary — with the Terek.) For views and plans of Madzhari, see P. S. Pallas, *Travels through the southern provinces of the Russian Empire* (Pallas, *Travels*), London, 1812, 2 vols., Vol. I, pl. XI–XIV.

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intercourse with the Genoese who were said to have had a large settlement in the valley of Kislovodsk.<sup>1</sup> Again, the existence of settlements of western traders on the north Caucasian steppe is indicated in the curious story of Josafat Barbaro about the raid of fanatical bands of dervishes from Derbent 'into Tumen' (at the estuary of the Terek) who, 'when they arrived at a river called Tero, which is in the province of Tezechia (Circassia) and about the mountaigne Caspio, where are many Catholic Christians, they slew them all'.<sup>2</sup>

The Fra Mauro Map of the middle of the fifteenth century and the so-called Borgia Map clearly indicate the rivers Kuma and Terek (Terco is named on the Borgia Map) and the valleys of the Aragvi and the Ksani leading into Georgia. The post-station Kobi, south of the gorge of the Terek and at the foot of the Krestovaya *col* which links the upper course of the Terek with the higher valley of the Aragvi, is named on both maps; and on the Borgia Map the Main (*Glavny*) and Flanking (*Bokovoy*) ridges of Caucasus are shown, and even the tribal name *Tusch*. Indeed, this latter pointer seems to hint that the caravans of the Genoese moved south-eastward into Kakheti with its silk-growing districts along approximately the same route which the Russian embassies were to follow over a century later.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen Age*, réimpression, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1923, Vol. II, pp. 93 ff., 555 ff.; also an article by F. S. Zevakin and N. A. Panchko in *Istoricheskiye Zapiski (IZ)*, III, 1938, pp. 72-139, 'Ocherki po istorii Genuezskikh koloniy na zapadnom Kavkaze v XIII i XV vv.', particularly pp. 86 ff.

For the tradition recorded by Dubois, see his *Voyage Autour du Caucase*, etc. (Dubois, *Voyage*), Vol. I, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Travels of Venetians in Persia (TVP)*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1873, p. 89. These dervishes were probably the Shi'a followers of Shaikh Haydar of Ardabil, d. 1487, cf. *TVP*, pp. 185 (*bis*) ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Imago Mundi (IM)*, Vol. XIII, 1956, plates to article by L. Bagrow, 'Italians on the Caspian'; also *ibid.*, x, 1953 article by G. Caraci, 'The Italian Cartographers of the Benicasa and Freducci Families and the so-called Borgia Map of the Vatican Library', pp. 31 and 38 ff. Also *Iran*, Vol. VI 1968 article by J. Richard 'European Voyages in the Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea (12th to 15th centuries)', pp. 45-7 and 50-1.

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For the end of the fifteenth century, the Genoese, Giorgio Interiano, gives an excellent description of the tribes along the Circassian coast. The Russians had little direct contact with the western Caucasus until the embassy of Elchin to the Dadiani of Mingrelia in 1639-40.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the casual details on topography recorded in the reports of Russian ambassadors to Kakheti in the later part of the sixteenth century, the first 'scientific' account of the Terek and northern and eastern Caucasia which has survived from Russian sources is in the Book of the Great Map (*Kniga glagolemaya Bolshoy Chertezh*). No copy of the map itself has been traced in the Russian archives; the Book appears to have been a guide to this document and was from time to time brought up to date. Serbina believes the seventh recension of the section which covers Caucasia to have been edited by Prince Grigori Suncheleyevich Cherkasski, paramount chief of the Pyatigorsk (Besh-tau) Kabardans, who died 1672.<sup>2</sup> G. S. Cherkasski was doing his editorial work nearly three quarters of a century after the embassies of Zvenigorodski, Sovin and Tatishchev, but it is probable that the details of the book which he was bringing up to date derived something from their reports. Another half century later, Wakhusht finished his descriptions and maps of Kartli north of the Kura, Oseti (G. Ovseti) and Kakheti. Although not without errors, Wakhusht's work was the first

<sup>1</sup> There is a convenient translation in French of Interiano in Dubois, *Voyage*, Vol. 1. The original edition is Giorgio Interiano *Della vita de Zychi, altrimente Circassi*, Venezia, 1502, apud Aldum Manutium.

Elchin's mission to the Dadiani was first summarized by Brosset, *EC/BHP* Vol. III, Nos. 5-7, cols. 102-12, and No. 11, col. 160; documents were published by Belokurov in *ChOID*, 1887, Vol. II; and the text in Lurye and Müller (edd.): *Puteshestviya Russkikh Poslov xvi-xvii vv.*

<sup>2</sup> The text of *Kniga* was edited and published by G. I. Spasski, Moscow, 1840, a copy of which is in the Library of the British Museum. Cf. also the article by Serbina in *Istoricheskiye Zapiski (IZ)*, Vol. 14, 1945, and further, *ibid.*, Vol. 23, 1947; and an article in *Russki Biograficheski Slovar (RBS)* under G. S. Cherkasski, who was the son of the Kabardan *mirza* Suncheley (= 'of the Sunzha').

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really comprehensive account of the topography of the central Caucasus and the upper valley of the Terek. Wakhusht was related by marriage to the Kabardan princes and there is evidence that he knew well Oseti and the upper valley of the Terek; it is curious that he makes use of the Ingush name *Lomeki* for the upper course of the Terek (*G. Tergi*). But Wakhusht, unfortunately, limited his famous *Geographical Description* to the countries which he regarded as properly forming part of the ancient kingdom of Georgia. He says little of the country north or east of Oseti and the westerly feeders of the Terek, although he must have followed the classic route along the Sunzha and the lower Terek when he accompanied the numerous suite of his father King Wakhtang VI on their withdrawal, in 1724, from Tiflis to Astrakhan.<sup>1</sup>

The Sunzha is the most important right-bank affluent of the Terek. Its course, with its numerous small tributaries and many crossings, was the short cut from the Cossack settlements on the lower Terek to the upper stream of that river where it emerges from the Daryal gorge. The Sunzha has its source in Mat-khokh, to the north-west of its longer affluent, the Assa. The two streams flow north to cut through the Black Mountains (*R. Chernye Gory*). Some 150 miles in length, the Sunzha only becomes a large river after its junction with the broad and turbulent Argun. Over the last twenty miles the combined streams of the Sunzha, Assa and Argun wind across the steppe to enter the Terek in a series of complex bends which make almost complete circles. The upper valleys of these rivers were, in the sixteenth century, covered with magnificent beech-forests, which in the nineteenth century enabled the 'sly Chechens' to maintain their prolonged resistance to Russian conquest.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For Wakhusht and his work, see Vol. II, Commentary on the Sources, 3.

<sup>2</sup> For detailed description of the valley of the Sunzha, see *Sbornik Svedeniy o Terskoy Oblasti*, Vladikavkaz, Vol. I, 1878, pp. 49 ff; an original

## 4. 'THE FREE TEREK COSSACKS'

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a rather original mixed culture grew out of the intercourse between the Cossacks settled along the Terek and Sunzha and the neighbouring inhabitants of the mountain zone – Kumyks, Avars, Chechens, Ingushes, Kabardans and Osetians. There were many combinations, and relations between the Cossacks and the tribesmen did not really harden until the eighteenth century. Then the progressively bureaucratic aspects of Russian rule along the Cossack Line (inevitable in the pattern of contemporary administrative techniques) and the attempts at proselytization on the part of the Orthodox Church (which were countered by Islamic propaganda sponsored by the Ottomans) provoked bitter antagonisms and chronic conflict. In the earlier period, the Kabardans welcomed Russian support against the Nogays, while the Chechens were subject to pressures from the Shevkal and the Avar khans; some Ingush clans mistrusted their Chechen neighbours; and both Ingushes and Osetians resented pretensions to overlordship on the part of the Kabardan princes.

The first Free Cossack communities, mostly composed of 'outlaws' from the Don and the Volga, settled round the estuary of the Terek about the middle of the sixteenth century. The relations of these early Cossacks, living independent of the authority of the Muscovite government, with the neighbouring Kumyks, Chechens and Kabardans, were not always unfriendly. They took wives from the neighbouring tribes, and there was some penetration of Russians into the Black Mountains, as witnessed by the remains of fortifications and and picturesque account in Steder's *Tagebuch*, Spb., 1797, pp. 5–7; also Baddeley, *RFC*, Vol. 1, *passim*; A. N. Genko, 'Iz kulturnogo proshlogo Ingushey' in *Zapiski Kollegii Vostokovedov*, Vol. v, ii, 1930, pp. 691 ff. (commenting on Steder). For the Chechen resistance to the Russians during the first half of the nineteenth century, see J. F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus (RCC)*, *passim*, based on the original Russian sources.

### ‘THE FREE TEREK COSSACKS’

place-names such as Urus-Martana (Russian Martin). Some of these Cossacks made their way as far as Georgia and in the third quarter of the sixteenth century several hundreds, drafted on the orders of Tsar Ivan IV, were in the employment of King Levan of Kakheti.<sup>1</sup>

The number of aliens among the Terek Cossacks was very great, whole *stanitsy* being non-Christian; but the Grebentsy (Cossacks of ‘the Ridge’ running along the south side of the Sunzha, to the south-east of modern Grozny) admitted only Christians or those who consented to become such. (Comparably, the Zaporozhian Cossacks, ‘beyond the rapids’ of the Dniepr, insisted on the kissing of the cross by new recruits, but were ready to accept fugitives of all nationalities: Poles, Moldavians, Germans, some Italians – and even Turks.) The wives of the Terek Cossacks were often of native birth – probably for the most part Chechens with some mixture of Kumyks; and to this influence it is said that the Cossacks owed their comparatively advanced agriculture and much else. The Cossacks of that day were probably at best the equal in culture of the Chechens and Kumyks and certainly inferior to the Circassians, to whom belonged the Kabardan princes and people. ‘Kabarda served as a lawgiver to the Grebentsy in matters of fashion,’ and from there they took their light and convenient military equipment and arms, their methods of warfare, *dzhigitovka* (feats of skill on horseback), and the graceful tunic buckled at the waist with a narrow leather belt and swinging down to the knees – known as the *cherkesska*.

As regards dwellings, the typical Russian *izba* was forgotten, and instead appeared the Kabardan *una*, with its open gallery and its internal construction, arrangement and decoration. All that remained of the Russian village was, externally, the street,

<sup>1</sup> D. Chubinov, ed., *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (‘The Life of Kartli’), Spb., 1854, pl. 107; cf. also V. L. Tatishvili, *Gruziny v Moskve*, Moskva, 1959, p. 23.

and, internally, the stove. (Here again, the Zaporozhian *kurens* may be compared with the communal long-houses of the maritime Circassians; indeed a strong Circassian influence may be suspected among these Cossacks of the Dniepr who, in, contemporary Russian documents are called, simply, 'Cherkasses'.)

Two kinds of culture – both new to the Cossacks – were probably borrowed from the Kumyks: those, namely, of the vine and of the silkworm, which flourish on the banks of the Terek to this day, having doubtless been supported through times of trouble and danger by the Cossack's passion for drink and his wife's delight in finery. Certainly until the Revolution, the Grebentsy women were noted for their good looks and free manners, and both in colouring and features, as well as in their semi-oriental costumes, they showed very strongly the strain of native blood in them and the continuing influence of Kabarda.<sup>1</sup>

##### 5. 'TEREK-TOWN'

At different times this name was applied to no less than three settlements along the Terek. The foundation of the first town

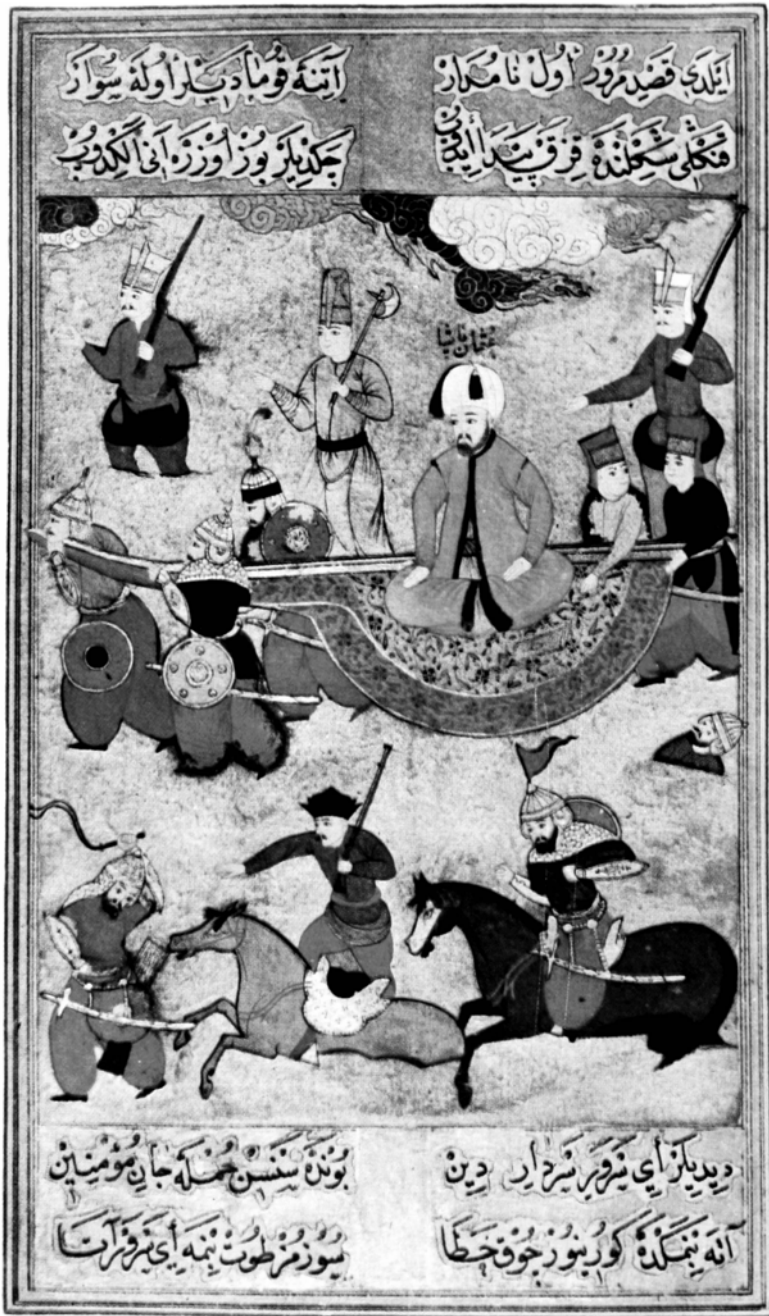
<sup>1</sup> Many details in Section 4 have been cited from Baddeley, *RCC*, Chap 1, cf. also S. G. Gmelin, *Reise*, Vol. iv, Spb., 1774, pp. 27–32, for a good account of the Grebentsy: 'When they first came to the Terek they bought and married many Tartar women, and have become half Tartar in their speech, outlook and conditions . . . But now (1774) they only marry among themselves and hardly understand the speech of the Mountain Tartars' (i.e. Kumukhs and Chechens). Gmelin distinguished three strata among the Cossacks of the Terek: (a) the old *Grebentsy* who came in the early sixteenth century; (b) the *Terski*, literally 'of the Terek', who were originally Cossacks of the Don settled by Peter the Great on the Sulak and moved to the Terek under Empress Anna (1735); (c) a third group, two-thirds from the Volga and one-third from the Don, who were brought in between 1720 and 1771. In 1772, Gmelin, p. 23, met the 130-year-old father of the then Ataman of the Grebentsy, who must have been born about 1642 – a curious link with the generation which followed the personalities in our texts. There is a fine description of life among the Grebentsy in Leo Tolstoy's novel, *The Cossacks*, written between 1852 and 1862 (English trans. by Rosemary Edmonds in Penguin Classics, 1960).



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1. 'Osman Pasha crossing the ice' (of the Straits of Kerch).  
 From the *Sheja'atname* of Asafi, MS. TY 6043, fol. 196r. of Istanbul University Library.

## 'TEREK-TOWN'

dated back to 1563 when, after his marriage to Maria Temryukova, daughter of the Kabardan prince Temryuk Aydarovich (C. Kemirgoko), Ivan IV sent a mission and troops to build a town on Temryuk's territory. 'We do not know its situation nor its fate' but it was probably on the border dividing the lands of Temryuk from the vassals who had revolted against him.<sup>1</sup> Little more is known of the second town founded in 1567. It was on the left bank of the Sunzha, on the peninsula formed by the junction of the Sunzha and the Terek.<sup>2</sup> In 1571 the Russian ambassador at the Ottoman Porte was explaining that it had been built to protect Temryuk against his enemies. Its existence became a major issue between the Tsar, the Sultan and the Crimean Khan. There was an agreement to abolish the town in 1574, but Smirnov doubts whether the undertaking was ever carried out.<sup>3</sup> At any rate, between 1578 and 1585 a new or restored town was established at the junction of the Terek and Sunzha. It is probable that it was from the older or newer of these two settlements that the ambush was organized against the column of Özdemirolu Osman marching from Derbent to Kerch in October 1583 – of which Asafi gives a first-hand account illustrated by miniatures.<sup>4</sup> In different documents there are references to *Sunzhenski ostrog*, *Ust Suyunchi*, *Terki*, *Sunzhi*, etc. *Staro-Sunzhenskoye* still appears on modern maps (Caucasia: 1 in 210,000, Sh. G5).

Between the autumn of 1587 and the spring of 1588, Russian officials and troops were busy building a fortified town on the

<sup>1</sup> Belokurov, *Snosheniya Rossii s Kavkazom* (Belokurov, *Snosheniya*), p. lxxxiv and n. 28.

<sup>2</sup> N. A. Smirnov (ed.), *Istoriya Kabardy*, Moskva, 1957, p. 42 (*Ist. Kabardy*).

<sup>3</sup> N. A. Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze v xvi-xix vekakh*, Moskva, 1958, pp. 29 ff. (Smirnov, *Politika*).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Asafi, ff. 182–8, MS. TY 6043 of Istanbul University Library, showing two miniatures, 186 r. and 188 v., of this action: 'The Rus attack the Ottomans as they cross' and 'Asafi's brother wounded – the Rus in their stockade'. (The former is reproduced here as plate 6, facing p. 293).

## RUSSIAN EMBASSIES

flats north of the southern branch (Tyumenka) of the estuary of the Terek, which flows into the Caspian opposite the Agrakhan peninsula. This was on or near the site of the former Kumyk settlement of Tyumen (where Barbaro had reported a massacre of Roman Catholic Christians towards the end of the fifteenth century). In Russian documents there is a reference to a prince of Tyumen (*Tyumenski knyaz*) for the years 1555 and 1567.<sup>1</sup> Soon after this date – probably during the war years 1569–70 – free Terek Cossacks had taken over here. The new settlement was sometimes called Tyumen-new-town or Tyumen-fort-on-the-Terek but soon, simply, Terek-town or Terki. The stronghold was intended to control the Shevkal of Tarku, a potential ally of the Ottomans and of the Crimean Tartars, although he had shown himself ready on more than one occasion to seek the favour of the Tsar. The wooden stockaded walls of the new Terki were hurriedly thrown up under pressure of negotiations with the Kabardans and King Alexander of Kakheti, who continued to urge for some years a combined Russian and Georgian attack on the Kumyks and the Avars. Terki soon became the permanent advance base between Astrakhan and the Cossack ‘lines’ along the Terek and the Sunzha. Here, Russian ambassadors of the last quarter of the sixteenth century – Birkin, Zvenigorodski, Vsevolodski, Sovin, Nashchokin and Tatishchev travelling between Astrakhan and Kakheti enjoyed the last – or on return the first – amenities of ‘civilised’ life. Beyond Terki lay the perils and discomforts of the river journey along the Terek and the Sunzha, the chancy anxieties of hospitality in the *kabaks* of the Kabardan princes, the perilous transit of the Daryal gorge, the long ride under the southern flanks of Caucasus, and the tented life and tricky negotiations wherever they found the king in the forests and valleys and country towns of Kakheti.

In 1636, when the Holstein diplomat Olearius passed

<sup>1</sup> Belokurov, *Snosheniya*, pp, li, lxxx.

## THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

through, Terki had grown to a place of some importance – with a standing garrison of 2,000 men; it was well fortified and furnished with heavy artillery. The town at that time contained the Old, the New and the Ghilan caravanserais, a bazaar and streets of shops, luxuriant gardens and communal baths, customs houses, courts for the sale of drink and the transaction of business, cathedral and parish churches and a monastery where the mountaineers were baptized. ‘A prosperous town’, observed the historian of the Terek Cossacks, ‘where the Terek army was numerous and lived well’. Beside the Cossacks, and numerous Russian officials and their families and servants, and Armenian, Georgian and Persian merchants, some of the mountain tribes had their own *slobody* or ‘free quarters’ round the outskirts of Terki: notably the Okok, who may be identified with the Akko group among the Ingushes, and the Michkizy or Minkizy, a branch of the Chechens. Shikh Mirza of the Okok was a good friend of the Russians and his nephew had been received in the Kremlin.<sup>1</sup>

### 6. THE TRIBES OF THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS: CIRCASIANS AND KABARDANS

There were many undertones, deriving from old historic conflicts, among the ethnic groups of the northern Caucasus. The long ascendancy of the Alans (Yas, Os) along the northern edge of the Caucasus had been broken by the Mongols in the thirteenth century. Later, in the last decade of the fourteenth century, the Golden Horde, formed by the Mongol conqueror Batu, had been shattered by the victory of Tamerlane over

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Larina, *Ocherki istorii gorodov Severnoy Osetii*, p. 16, citing Popko, *Terskiye Kazaki so starodavnikh vremen*, Spb., 1880, p. xii; also Olearius, *Voyages très curieux et très renommés faits en Moscovie et Perse*, Amsterdam ed. of 1727, 2 vols. fol., edited by le Sieur de Wicquefort (Olearius/W.), showing a fine engraving of Terki opposite p. 483 (reproduced here as plate 2, facing p. 32). For some further details, see the article by Allen, ‘The Volga-Terek Route’, in *BK*, cited on p. 11, n. 1 above.

Tokhtamysh at Tartarup on the Terek. The Os had survived in the mountains and had, indeed, descended into the central districts of upper Georgia. Their clan structure, dominated by noble families, had little in common with the wilder and freer communities of the Chechens and Ingushes who tolerated no first men among equals. In the first half of the sixteenth century, the Kabardans – Circassians whose social structure has been compared to that of a military order – had moved from the Crimea along the line of the Kuban and assumed the ascendancy formerly enjoyed by the Golden Horde. In the third quarter of the century, when Temryuk made his alliance with Ivan IV, the Kabardan princes were still comparative newcomers, threatened by the Nogays and the Crim Tartars – successor states of the Golden Horde – and by the rather powerful Shevkal of Tarku. Hence, perhaps, as Baddeley has observed, is partly explained the readiness of the Kabardan princely families to attach themselves to the Tsar.<sup>1</sup>

The Circassians or Cherkesses (*T. Çerkesler*) represent a stock formerly much more widely distributed round the shores of the Pontic basin. They are the descendants, indeed, of the old pre-Indo-European ‘Maeotic’ stock of the first millennium B.C., which formed a substantial proportion of the population of the Hellenic city states then flourishing round the shores of the Crimea and the eastern Pontus: and they had been, earlier, constituents of the complex racial background of the Cimmerian and Scythian hordes. Circassian place-names are to be identified in many parts of the Ukraine; and the Circassians formed an important element in the population of the Crimea until the eighteenth century. They survived with gallant tenacity in the mountains of the north-western Caucasus and along the valley of the Kuban until the Russian conquest in the sixties of the nineteenth century. Old Russian documents refer

<sup>1</sup> Baddeley, *RFC*, Vol. II, pp. 210 ff. For further on the Kabardans, see below, Commentary 12: ‘The princely families of Kabarda’.

## THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

frequently to the Cossacks as Cherkesses and there was clearly a very substantial substratum of Circassian blood in the very mixed population of the northern Caucasus and the Black Sea coast-lands as far west as the Dniepr. But this is only one aspect of the remarkable dispersion of the Circassians. In the classical world and down to the Middle Ages, the slave market was the normal mechanism for maintaining the labour supply of civilized countries. Hence it was an instrument for imposing a continual process of redistribution of population. As slaves and soldiers the Circassians were celebrated in the Byzantine and Islamic worlds; and they finally rose to fame in the Mamluk corps which dominated Egypt from the later Middle Ages until the generation of Napoleon. The Mamluk corps was, in fact, a sort of foreign legion which was recruited largely from the western Caucasus and the Kipchak steppe. There is evidence, too, that there was a two-way influence and that the military ascendancy of the Kabardans, who were masters of the north Caucasian steppe from the beginning of the sixteenth century, owed something to the discipline and techniques of the Mamluk 'brotherhood'.

There is a certain touch of a rather naive 'colonialism' in the account of the way of life of the Circassians in the sixteenth century in the official Soviet *Ocherki Istorii SSSR*. Circassian culture was, in fact, original and sophisticated in the sense that Polynesian culture may be said to have been. They had a complicated social hierarchy which, though 'slave-owning' (as were contemporary Middle Eastern and European societies) was formal, disciplined and, often, kindly. They were skilled gardeners, boat-builders and fishermen, noted horse-breeders, brilliant in guerrilla tactics on their own terrain; and acute politicians who could quickly adapt themselves to the manners and court life of Istanbul, Bakhchisaray or Moscow. While they remained among their own forests and hills, they led lives which, if bucolic, were agreeable and certainly compared well

with contemporary existence in Gaelic Scotland or Ireland – or for that matter in the fuggy and bug-ridden log houses and fever-infested alleys of Russian officials living in Astrakhan.

The political organization of the Circassian tribes of the western Caucasus was loose and haphazard. While the Shapsughs were, perhaps, the most numerous group, there was, west of the Kuban, no paramount prince – as there was in Kabarda. At the same time, in the Russian sources for the middle and second half of the sixteenth century, some ‘princes’ of the western tribes are mentioned; and in their dealings with Moscow they often worked together and spoke in the name of ‘the whole Cherkess land’.<sup>1</sup>

In the north Caucasian plain, between the upper Kuban and the Sunzha, the Kabardans had a more developed social structure. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, Kabarda was divided into several wide domains governed by the members of related ‘princely’ families who claimed common descent from the chieftain, Inal, who had led them from the Crimea and settled the country to the east of the Kuban with a stronghold and centre in the Besh-tau hills. There were ‘greater and lesser princes’ according to the Russian sources. In their remote environment, these princes, with their privileged bands of armoured retainers, had something of the ascendancy and the prestige of the Livonian Knights among the Balts. At the same time the rivalries and animosities of the different princes of the house of Inal recall the feuds among

<sup>1</sup> For a recent summary of literature on the Circassians, see articles by Quelquejay, Ayalan and Halil Inalcik, under ‘Çerkes’, in *EI*, 2nd ed.; and a longer study by Mirza Bala under ‘Çerkesler’ in *İslam Ansiklopedisi (IA)*, the Turkish version of *EI*. The best descriptions of life among the Circassians, before their dispersion by the Russians in the 1860s are to be found in the poems and stories of Lermontov; in Dubois, Vol. 1; and in James Stanislaus Bell, *Journal of a residence in Circassia during the years 1837, 1838 and 1839*, 2 vols., London, 1840. (Louis Vivien’s Paris edition of 1841 with its learned introduction and notes is in many ways to be preferred to the English original.)

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the various branches of the MacDonalDs in the contemporary western Highlands of Scotland. The Kabardan term for their princes was *pshe* – originally heads of families, elders. As a united and privileged group, the princely families controlled their ‘serf’ population, themselves owing allegiance to the eldest brother. The estates of the princes consisted of groups of *kabaks* or rural settlements. These were composed of tents and hutments – which were sometimes moved from one area to another, according to the vicissitudes of seasons and local wars. The Kabardan princes had no manors nor castles, unlike the contemporary Polish nobility and Cossack colonels in the Ukraine, but they seem to have taken refuge, on occasion, in strongholds built of stone which could not be captured without ‘cannon and arquebuses’ and which were probably the ruins of the castles of the earlier Alanic culture in the northern Caucasus. Here, it may be observed that the ruling classes all over the Middle East and round the Pontus spent much of the year in a rather luxurious tented life, taking their dues in kind from the enserfed population and passing their time in great hunting expeditions. This way of life was followed, on a grander scale, by the Turkish Sultans and the Persian Shahs, the Georgian kings and the great Polish magnates in Podolia and the Ukraine. It explains the relative modesty of palaces and private houses of the royal or rich in Istanbul, Tabriz, Isfahan, Kazvin or Tiflis by comparison with the contemporary private architecture of western Europe. Among the Kabardans, as among the Turks, Persians and Georgians, wealth was represented in costly tents and rugs, costumes and fabrics, armour, arms and plate, great herds of thoroughbred horses, slaves, hounds and falcons. It was, in fact, a very mobile world, deriving its wealth from stock-raising, handicrafts and mutual plunder.

On the north Caucasian plains, agriculture had been traditional, back to Scythian times. In Kabarda it was developed

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to the extent that in years of good harvest the Russian posts along the Terek hastened to lay in supplies of grain from their Kabardan neighbours. The staple crop was millet. Hunting and fishing were also important sources of supply; and fishing rights along the rivers, as in the Gaelic far west with its somewhat comparable culture, were a frequent cause of feud and conflict.

After the *pshe* or princes, the leading class in Kabardan society were the *work* (Circassian) – the *uzdeni* of the Russian sources which use this Tartar term. The better sort among the *work*, the *tlakotlesh* and the *dezhenugo* – the *kozlary* and *duzhnyuki* of the Russian sources – were recruited from the immediate kinsmen of the *pshe*. They constituted the mounted detachments of the leading princes; they wore armour and carried long lances and sabres. They corresponded to the *druzhiny* of the early Russian princes; and may be compared to the ‘tacksmen’ who formed the ‘tail’ of the Gaelic chieftains in contemporary Highland society. Some of these ‘best men’ were masters of their own *kabaks*. The class of *work* as a whole were free to travel from one estate to another and they composed the permanent council of the prince which he was obliged to consult as we note in the negotiations of the Prince of Little Kabarda with Zvenigorodski.

Among the groups dependent on the *pshe* and their *work*, Russian sources mention the ‘black people’ (*chernye lyudi*), the *tl'fokot'l*: the settled population who had been mastered by the Kabardans at the beginning of the century. They were doubtless a mixture of the autochthonous Circassians (*Adighe*) who were living to the east of the Kuban with some elements of Alans and Tartars. They were also the *yasiry* or captive slaves taken in war.

Like the Circassians of the Black Sea coast, the Kabardans, in the sixteenth century, were by no means united. The internal history of Kabarda is a record of bloody clashes between the

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different princes. In these affrays they would set fire to each others' settlements, trample down the crops and lead off the captured serfs as prisoners – often for later sale as slaves. However, the notion of 'the whole of the Kabardan land' existed among the Kabardans and attempts were made to unite the country.

One of the Kabardan princes bore the title of 'great', 'the chief prince', interpreted by the Turks as *vali*. This title was not patrilinear. After the death of a 'chief prince', a new prince would be chosen from among the elder members of the princely line according to precedence; he would be 'placed' in his dignity by a council 'of the whole of the Kabardan land'. At these councils other questions might be decided: as, for instance, in 1589, the ratification of the allegiance to the Tsar by the whole Kabardan people. On that occasion, Prince Yansokh 'summoned the council in Kabarda, assembling with the Kabardan princes and with all the *mirzy* and *uzdeni* and with all the land'. A recent Soviet historian supposes that in the sixteenth century such councils still preserved a democratic character to a marked degree and that the participation of the peasants was not restricted, if only for the hearing of the decisions taken by the *work*.

The situation of Kabarda, which controlled the exits from the mountains on to the winter pastures of the north Caucasian plain, enabled the princes to assert a certain ascendancy over the tribes of the central Caucasus who were more backward than the Kabardans in their economic and social development and in their military techniques. The dependence of the Osetians on the Kabardan princes was clearly established in the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For social conditions and terminology in Sections 6–11, the editor has drawn on *Ocherki Istorii SSSR: Period Feodalizma, konets xv veka – nachalo xvii veka*, Academy of Sciences of USSR, 1955 (*OI/PF/xv–xvii vv.*), pp. 818–873.

Further on the Kabardans see Commentary 12: 'The princely families of Kabarda'.

7. THE CENTRAL CAUCASUS: OSETIANS, CHECHENS  
AND INGUSHES

Following the Mongol conquest of the north Caucassian steppe in the middle of the thirteenth century, elements of the population of the old Alanic kingdom had taken refuge in the mountains and gorges along the western tributaries of the Terek. The Alans themselves, in their day, had been a master people speaking a language which has been classified as west Iranian; but the ethnic composition of their kingdom was, doubtless, mixed, containing a substantial proportion of Circassian blood, with some elements of Khazar, East Slav and even Gothic origin. Alanic penetration into the central Caucasus and the northern districts of Georgia dated back to centuries before the Mongol invasions. Certainly as early as the eleventh century, Georgian sources indicate that the Georgian kings favoured them as mercenaries. There were marriages between the Alanic princely families and the Georgian royal house: the second husband of the celebrated Georgian Queen Tamar (1184-1212) was the Alan, David Soslan. To the Georgians, the Alans (As or Yasi) were known as *Ows*, plural *Owsni*, and their country as Owseti, hence the Russian hybrid *Osetiny*, and the anglicized Osetians, which latter form is the most convenient for our text. The conditions of life in the mountains, where the economy was based on stock-raising, led to a static way of life. The ingrowing patriarchal clan was characterized by the dominance of the elders of the family, the cult of the hearth, and the blood-feud. Feudal relationships, which are revealed only in the later sources, grew gradually out of the patriarchal-tribal customs. How the process of feudalization was continuing throughout the sixteenth century may be judged from the ancient architectural works which have survived: the *galuani* or stone-built castles of the Osetian feudal lords which were designed for large families. The dependence

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of the Osetians on the Kabardan overlords who controlled the northern exits from the gorges of the Terek and its affluents is evident from seventeenth-century sources which note the payment of tribute (*yasak*) in cattle, grain and slaves. On the whole the Osetians remained miserably poor and their only sources of living, beyond their meagre stock-raising, lay in portage over the passes and, alternatively, in hold-ups of passing convoys. In each case, it was customary to pay them off in bales of cloth.<sup>1</sup>

East of the Terek gorge, the country to the north and north-east of the main granitic ridge of the Caucasus was the setting for varied ethnic, social and economic conditions. Over the high pastures and in the deep ravines of the feeders of the Sunzha lived patriarchal communities of very democratic type. Here, according to Baddeley, no man would accept 'princely' rank, even when pressed by his fellows. The people generally called themselves *maarul*, 'mountaineers' – which is reflected in the *Tavlistan* of the Russian maps, from Turko-Tartar *tau*, mountain; and in Daghestan further east, from Turkish *dagh*, mountain. The names *Chechen* and *Ingush*, familiar in the literature of European travellers, are comparatively recent appellations of communities identified by the Russians with local place-names.<sup>2</sup> *Chechen* derives from the great *aul* Chechen on

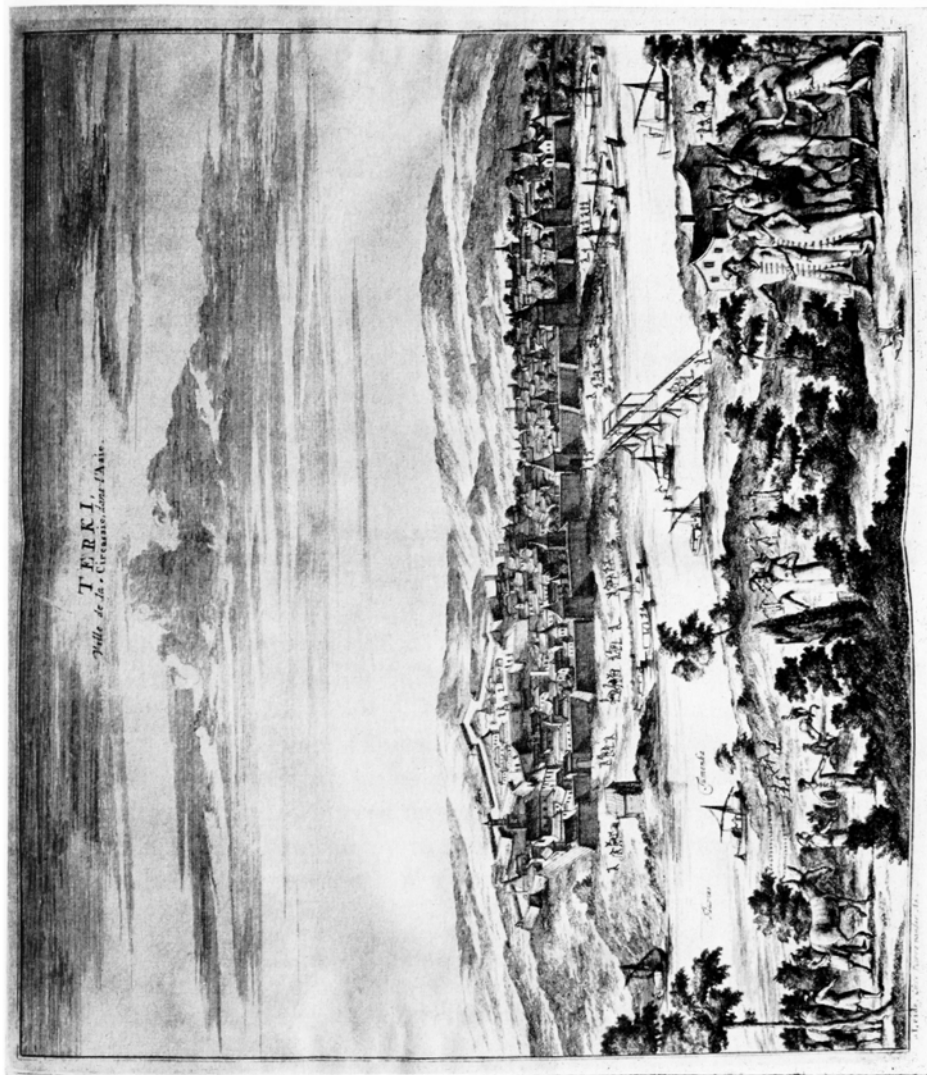
<sup>1</sup> For the Osetians, see article by Bartold/Minorsky under 'Alān' in *EI*, 2nd ed.: 'The Alāns were the ancestors of the present-day Ossets whose name (in Georgian: Ows-e'ti) is derived from Ās (very probably the ancient Aorsi: al-Mas'ūdī, II, 10, 12, al-Arsiyya guards in Khazaria) who were apparently a sister tribe of the Alāns. The Armenian Geography calls the westernmost Alāns "Ashtigor" (As-Digor), and the Digor are the western division of the present-day Ossets, while "Asi" in Osset refers to the still more westerly region near mount Elbruz, which the Ossets must have occupied too in early days.' Cf. further Chap. 15, p. 503, n. 1; and see A. Z. V. Togan, article 'Allān' in *IA*.

<sup>2</sup> For the democratic practices of the mountaineers, see Baddeley, *RFC*, Vol. 1, p. 218. For *Tauli* or Mountain Turks, see Douglas Freshfield,

the banks of the Argun; the first documentary reference dates from the year 1708. *Ingush* derives from the village of Angusht, first attested by Wakhusht in 1724. The Chechens call themselves *Naktchoi* (Baddeley) with which may be compared the west Circassian *Natukhoi* (Dubois de Montpéreux). The name implies 'family', 'stem', and has Armenian and even, perhaps, western pre-Celtic connotations as in Pictish *necht*.<sup>1</sup> Of the Ingush self-name, *Ghalgha* or *Galgay*, Wakhusht gives the Georgian form *Ghlig(os)* – whence the district of Ghligveti shown on his map of Oseti. *Ghligos* he describes as the mythical grandson of *Durdzukos*. This latter name is found in Georgian sources as early as the tenth century A.D.; and Genko believes that 'for the most ancient epoch *Durdzuk(os)* signifies the whole of the northern Caucasus'. He suggests that the origin of the name may be detected in the word *durdzuq* which survives among the contemporary Osetians with the meaning of 'rock-pit', i.e. ravine. Thus the Durdzüks of the Georgian sources would be the 'people of the ravines'. This may be compared with the tribal name *Okok* in Zvenigorodski's reports, rendered in Steder's *Tagebuch* as *Agi*. Genko gives the Ingush form as

*The exploration of the Caucasus* (Freshfield, *Exploration*), 2 vols., London, 1896, Vol. 1, p. 60 and *passim*. J. G. Gärber, 'Opisaniye stran vdol zapadnogo berega Kaspiyskogo morya, 1728 g.' (Gärber, *Opisaniye*) printed in M. O. Kosven (ed.), *Istoriya, geografiya i etnografiya Dagestana, xvii–xix vv.: Arkhivnye materialy* (Kosven, *IGED*), Moscow, 1958, states that the word *tau* applies to the highest peaks and ridges and *dagh* to mountain regions of medium altitude. Thus, *Tavlintsy* means people living along the high ridges.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. E. D. Allen, article 'Ex Ponto', I and II: 'Heni-Veneti and Os-Alans' in *BK*, Nos. 30–1, pp. 41–3, for detailed refs. The same sense is preserved in the Osetic word for 'clan', *mukkagh*, or *m'iggag*, 'rod, plemya, familiya, semya', cf. Kasayev, *Osetinsko-Russki slovar*, 1952, p. 236; also *m'ig*, 'sperma, semya'. These compare rather closely with Irish MS. variants, *meic*, *mic*. For Celtic elements in the Pontic steppe, as neighbours of the Alans, see Minns, cited above, Rostovtseff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, Oxford, 1922; Sulimirski, 'The Forgotten Sarmatians' in *Vanished civilizations*, London, 1963, pp. 279–98.



TERKI.  
Villes de la Circassie, dans l'Asie.

2. Terki town, c. 1634. From Olearius/W., Vol. 1, pp. 452/3.



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