

Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Georgian

Edited by
**Stephen H. Rapp, Jr and
Paul Crego**



The Worlds of Eastern Christianity, 300-1500

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Volume 5

Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity:
Georgian

THE WORLDS OF EASTERN CHRISTIANITY, 300–1500

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General Editors' Preface

Christianity very quickly expanded beyond its narrow Palestinian confines, spawning different versions of itself as it went. By the seventh century, Christian communities were to be found as far apart as Ireland and China. Such a situation makes a mockery of any simple division into Western and Eastern Christianity, and certainly it makes more sense to accept that even quite shortly after the life of Christ there were many Christianities across Eurasia that differed in innumerable subtle and not so subtle ways. Yet lines must be drawn if one is ever to achieve anything more than a superficial survey and often, as here, there is a need to shed light on a relatively neglected area of study. For the purposes of this series, therefore, 'Eastern Christianity' will refer to those forms of Christianity that evolved in the Middle East in the period 300–1500, excluding the forms of Christianity that grew up in the Slavic world and the lands east of Iran.

Besides the fact that the Christianity of this region and period has received less attention than the Christian communities of Europe, which deserves redress, it is also true to say that Christianity in the Middle East developed along very different lines to Christianity elsewhere, evolving its own distinctive forms and identities. In the first place, it was heir to Greek culture in a very intimate way, for all the principal Hellenistic cities were to be found in this region and the Greek language and literature continued to predominate there until at least the seventh century CE. Secondly, the linking of religion and imperial power that followed on from the conversion of Constantine the Great affected the Middle East much more than Europe, since the majority of the great urban sees of the Roman Empire were located in the East, and this became even more true after the fall of Rome in the fifth century CE and the consequent decline of urban culture in the West. Thirdly, the Middle East was a land of very ancient civilizations, with many different groups of very diverse linguistic, ethnic and religious traditions. This, combined with the second point, gave rise to a series of confrontations between the imperial position and the position of those communities that wanted to maintain a certain distance from the imperial authorities, the result of which was a number of subtly distinguished doctrinal positions that served to reinforce and articulate the pre-existing differences. Fourthly, in the seventh century there occurred in the Middle East the event that most strongly defined Eastern Christianity, namely the rise of Islam. This saw Christians revert from being a ruling majority to, over time, a ruled minority – one that had to come to terms not only with loss of political power and patronage, but also with the ideological challenge of a new and successful monotheism. These four reasons, along with numerous features of climate, topography and human geography that are unique to the Middle East, meant that the Christians of the region evolved a distinctive culture, the main aspects of which will be presented in these volumes. The

period covered, 300–1500 CE, is inevitably to some degree arbitrary, but its general parameters do encompass the key events of the formation of Eastern Christianity. The starting point is marked by the accession of Constantine the Great, in recognition of the immense changes that his conversion set in train in this region. There is no natural end point – indeed, Eastern Christianity is still changing and adapting today – but, with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 CE, the last vestiges of Christian rule in the East were swept away and with them went any hope of a *reconquista* and a return of a Christian polity.

As noted above, Eastern Christianity is much less known and studied than its Western counterpart that grew up in an emerging Europe, and it is the principal aim of this series to redress this deficiency and to provide a foundation for new research. Distance from Europe is not, however, the only reason for the relative neglect of the topic. East Christian studies were born in the Vatican of the early modern period, when the See of Rome was trying to attract the Middle Eastern churches to Catholicism. This legacy has left traces in subsequent research to this day, fostering an approach that has been overwhelmingly theological and philological, often disguised as ‘oriental’ or ‘biblical’ studies. Originating, as it did, from different disciplines, scholarly production is very scattered across frequently obscure publications that are difficult to access by those who have no specialized library at hand. In addition, the multicultural and multilingual world of late antique and medieval Eastern Christianity has quite naturally created compartmentalized clusters of scholars, defined and divided by various linguistic and subject specialities, to the point that students of the same bilingual society have worked separately on the sources available in each language.

This series seeks to address these problems by making available some of the most influential research published to date on a selection of subjects – works that have been central to the way in which we have come to define and understand Eastern Christianity. Reflecting what has long been the most common approach, a first set of volumes will present the language, literature and history of the various East Christian communities; a second series will, however, take a thematic approach, so that a number of different topics prominent in modern scholarly literature can be dealt with in a way that crosses the various cultural and linguistic boundaries. This will permit a reframing of the fragmented and static view that research to date has tended to give of the east Christian world – and behind it, of the early Islamic empire which these communities populated. The series as a whole will, it is hoped, serve as a starting point for a more holistic approach to Eastern Christianity.

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Introduction

Since the inception of Byzantine Studies in the eighteenth century, medieval Georgia's image as an intrinsically Orthodox and even Byzantine culture has proven remarkably durable.¹ Georgia and its Christian neighbours, Armenia and Caucasian Albania, are typically portrayed as the Empire's strategically-crucial eastern periphery, where formidable enemies like the Iranians, Arabs, Seljuqs and Ottomans posed an imminent danger.² Modern political exigencies have bolstered the association. Soviet academics enthusiastically exploited Georgia's tie to Byzantium so as to root the USSR in 'progressive' medieval Europe even before the consolidation of Rus' and the conversion of Vladimir in the late tenth century.³ Within the Georgian academic community, the historiographical linkage of medieval Georgia and Byzantium has been reinvigorated by the explosive surge of patriotism following the failure of the Soviet state and the festering rivalry between the central authority in T'bilisi, on the one hand, and the breakaway regions of Abkhazia (Ap'xazet'i) and South Ossetia and their protector, the Russian Federation, on the other. In recent years, the Georgian government's campaign to achieve full membership in NATO, the EU and other Euro-American organizations has stirred some local scholars to prove Georgia's supposedly age-old connection to

¹ Though the contentious term 'medieval' is grounded in Western European chronology and institutions, it is utilized here in a broad chronological sense to denote the period from the end of Late Antiquity through the fall of the Byzantine Empire. Following Soviet convention, Georgian *shuasaukuneobrivi* ('medieval') designates the long span from Constantine's conversion to the eighteenth century. On the birth of Byzantine Studies, see Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack, 'Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline', in Jeffreys, Haldon and Cormack (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 3–20. See also Stefan Rebenich, 'Late Antiquity in Modern Eyes', in Philip Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Chichester and Malden, MA, 2009), pp. 77–92.

² Though he has considerably more to say about neighbouring Armenia, Edward Gibbon already expressed this idea in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1776).

³ Soviet Marxism-Leninism appropriated the Eurocentric idea of European exceptionalism, even for eras when 'Europe' – however it might be defined in bygone times – was a relative backwater in the Afro-Eurasian world, for which see Jerry H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (Oxford, 1993); Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (Oxford, 1989); and Andre Gunder Frank and Barry K. Gills (eds), *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (London and New York, 1993).

‘Europe’ by exaggerating the scope and depth of Georgian–Byzantine relations.⁴ Such attempts routinely segregate the real ties linking Georgia and Byzantium from their dense regional and Eurasian nexus. In the process, they simplistically equate ‘Christian’, ‘Byzantine’ and ‘European’,⁵ three concepts which certainly overlap and share a great deal in common, but which are by no means synonymous or static.

Medieval Georgia’s myriad connections with the Byzantine Empire and the larger Commonwealth are beyond doubt,⁶ and to approach it *primarily* from a Byzantine or Eastern Christian angle is altogether sensible. The two historical phenomena that most typify medieval Georgia – the long Christianization of the various Georgian peoples which rapidly gained momentum after the ca. 337 conversion of the monarchy of K’art’li (Iberia) and the thousand-year regime of the Georgian branch of the Bagratid dynasty from the ninth century down to the Russian conquest – are intimately bound to the Byzantine experience. Shared Christian affiliation and especially Constantinople’s unrelenting claims of political and religious superiority over the ‘East’ – that is to say, the Near East including its northernmost sector, Caucasia – are principal factors in the enduring encounter of Georgia and Byzantium. A second factor pre-dated Byzantium itself, whatever moments or processes are deemed to signal the transition from the

⁴ Perhaps the most dramatic example is the identification of the 1.8 million-year-old hominid remains at Dmanisi in southern Georgia as the ‘earliest Europeans’ by some Georgian and European paleoanthropologists. The mis-characterization has even found its way into college textbooks in North America: Barry Lewis, Robert Jurmain and Lynn Kilgore, *Understanding Humans: Introduction to Physical Anthropology and Archaeology*, 10th edn (Belmont, CA, 2008), p. 252. Notwithstanding this error of description, the important Dmanisi fossils show that southern Caucasia was, in fact, ‘the apparent crossroads of hominid dispersal into Europe’ (Leo Gabunia *et al.*, ‘Earliest Pleistocene Hominid Cranial Remains from Dmanisi, Republic of Georgia: Taxonomy, Geological Setting, and Age’, *Science*, 288 (12 May 2000), p. 1025).

⁵ For example, T’edo Dundua, *Georgia within the European Integration as Seen through Coinage* (T’bilisi, 1999) and T’edo Dundua, *North and South: Towards the Question of the [sic] NATO Enlargement*, bankrolled by NATO and published on its website, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/dundua.pdf> (accessed 20 July 2012). While Georgia and the larger Caucasian region undoubtedly have ties with the ancient Mediterranean world, these have often been exaggerated and even fabricated for modern political ends. For a thoughtful examination of the projections of power embedded in large-scale geographical concepts, see Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, 1997).

⁶ The compelling idea of a Byzantine Commonwealth has been taken up by several authors, including Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (New York, 1971); Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993); Jonathan Shepard, ‘The Byzantine Commonwealth 1000–1550’, in Michael Angold (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 3–52; and Stephen H. Rapp, Jr, ‘Chronology, Crossroads, and Commonwealths: World Regional Schemes and the Lessons of Caucasia’, in Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Anand A. Yang (eds), *Interactions: Transregional Perspectives on World History* (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 167–201.

Roman to the Byzantine empires:⁷ the immense strategic value of the isthmus for the great powers of Eurasia. Caucasia was not only a prime staging point for attacks upon rivals, but also a coveted reservoir of human resources and an important transit route linking Iran, Anatolia and the steppes of present-day Russia and Ukraine, not to mention the Black and Caspian Seas.⁸

Given its importance to the Byzantines and the historiographical assertions voiced by Byzantinists, the meagre scholarship devoted to medieval Georgia outside Caucasia is curious.⁹ More often than not, the works that have been published slavishly repeat the notion that Byzantium and Georgia naturally and inevitably belonged to a sharply defined Eastern Christian world stretching from Greece and the Balkans in the west to Caucasia and later Russia in the east, and south to Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. As the twentieth century drew to a close, this paradigm showed signs of a fundamental shift. While medieval Georgians were active participants in the transregional Christian enterprise, academics have come to appreciate the extraordinary diversity and heterogeneity of pre-modern Christianity itself.¹⁰ Even at the turn of the first/second century, when a religious identity distinct from Judaism crystallized within elements of the Jesus Movement, there already existed numerous – and sometimes competing – Christianities with no fixed, overarching hierarchy. With the notorious exception of Julian ‘the Apostate’ (r. 361–63), all Eastern Roman and Byzantine emperors starting with Constantine the Great (r. 324–37) claimed for themselves the

⁷ Precisely when we may begin to speak of the Byzantine Empire is hotly debated; the reigns of Constantine, Theodosius II, Justinian and Heraclius are the most popular candidates. For their part, the Byzantines always called themselves ‘Romans’. As used by scholars, ‘Byzantine’ was an invention of the Renaissance. Thus, even the term ‘Byzantine’ is not as straightforward as it might seem. See, for example, Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 133–44.

⁸ This fact has been stressed by numerous historians, for example: ‘Yet the Transcaucasus as a whole is far from being an isolated backwater. It is a region of great strategic importance; its peoples played a vital role in the affairs of all the major Near Eastern states; and at the same time the logic of its internal politics created constant demand for outsiders to intervene’ (Mark Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600–1025* (Berkeley, 1996), p. 199).

⁹ Consider the two excellent chapters devoted to Armenia and the absence of a chapter devoted to Georgia or even the larger Caucasian world (which is especially curious given the chapters addressing the Balkan region) in Jonathan Shepard (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire, c. 500–1492* (Cambridge, 2008). Cf. Cyril Toumanoff, ‘Armenia and Georgia’, in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4, 1 (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 593–637 and 983–1009. As a consequence of the longstanding presence of Christianity in Georgia and Georgia’s forced incorporation into the Russian Empire in the early nineteenth century, scholars of the Near and Middle East have been less likely to investigate medieval Caucasia, let alone Georgia.

¹⁰ Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford, 2003) and Elaine H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York, 1989).

lofty position of defender of Christians everywhere, including those resident in polities hostile to Byzantium.¹¹

The notion of a uniform let alone cohesive Eastern Christianity must also be handled with caution. Certain ideals, institutions and theologies certainly held together – or at least commonly exemplified and affected – Christians in the eastern Mediterranean, the Holy Land, the Near and Middle East and Caucasia, yet an astonishing assortment of Christianities flourished in this cosmopolitan, tri-continental zone. Over time several varieties of Christianity having robust ethno-linguistic, sociocultural, theological and/or hierarchical cores coalesced into ‘national’ churches.¹² The Georgian Orthodox Church is one such example. We must bear in mind that despite a ‘national’ church’s (apparent) organizational superiority and the monopoly it sought to impose within its jurisdiction (often through autocephaly), dissent and alternative clusters of power were always present. Though it envisaged itself as a timeless organization whose very existence was ordained and guaranteed by the divine, a ‘national’ church, like all historical phenomena, was actually in constant motion and subject to human action. Moreover, the extent of Byzantine influence fluctuated substantially among – and even within – the various ‘national’ churches and across time. Medieval Georgia thus belonged to an interconnected, multi- and cross-cultural network of Eastern Christianities whose centre of gravity was the Byzantine Empire. It must be emphasized that despite its best political and rhetorical efforts, Constantinople never wielded absolute power over the whole Commonwealth.

Christianity came early to Georgia, principally from the south but also from far eastern Anatolia. While traces of a Christian presence may be detected already in the

¹¹ T.D. Barnes, ‘Constantine and the Christians of Persia’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 75 (1985), pp. 126–36. Ironically, at its greatest extent, the Sasanian Empire under the seventh-century Great King Khusrau II was ‘undoubtedly the largest empire of Christians in the world’: Geoffrey Greatrex, ‘Khusrau II and the Christians of the Roman Empire’, in F. Young, M. Edwards and P. Parvis (eds), *Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2003*, (Leuven, 2006; *Studia Patristica* 39), pp. 47–52, quotation from p. 47.

¹² A clear statement of the validity of ‘national’ churches in the Eastern Christian ecumene is articulated in the *vita* of Cyril and Methodius: ‘When he was in Venice ... [Catholics] advanced the trilingual heresy, saying: “... We know of only three languages worthy of praising God in the Scriptures, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.” And the Philosopher [i.e., Cyril] answered them: “Does not God’s rain fall upon all equally? And does not the sun shine also upon all? And do we not all breathe air in the same way? Are you not ashamed to mention only three tongues, and to command all other nations and tribes to be blind and deaf? Tell me, do you render God powerless, that He is incapable of granting this? Or envious, that He does not desire this? We know of numerous peoples who possess writing and render glory unto God, each in its own language ... Armenians, Persians, Abkhazians, Iberians [i.e. K’art’velians], Sogdians, Goths, Avars, Turks, Khazars, Arabs, Egyptians, and many others”’ (*Medieval Slavic Lives of Saints and Princes*, trans. Marvin Kantor (Ann Arbor, 1983), cap. 16).

third century,¹³ it was the fourth-century conversion of the K'art'velian monarch of eastern Georgia that not only enhanced the possibility for an alliance with Christianizing Byzantium but also drew the Georgian peoples into the evolving world of the Christian Near East.¹⁴ While Christianity brought new opportunities and insisted that certain facets of behaviour and thought change, conversion was a two-way street: the faith itself was enculturated so as to bring it into alignment with some local mores.

In the case of eastern Georgia and its neighbours, this highly dynamic and long-term process entailed the survival – and the Christianization – of ancient Iranian and Iranian-like models and traditions within Christian Caucasian society.¹⁵ Even centuries after its initial Christianization, Late Antique K'art'li was characterized by ideas, practices and social structures which look more Iranian than Roman or Byzantine. These are particularly striking since the typical depiction of Eastern Christianity is grounded on a Byzantine Greek and especially Constantinopolitan image, one that was sharply at odds with Sasanian Iran. An Iranian affinity should come as no surprise, however, because Caucasia had constituted the north-western edge of the Iranian Commonwealth since Achaemenid times. Its attachment to the Near and Middle East, especially Iran, was not suddenly and completely abandoned with the adoption of Christianity. Thus, five hundred years after the baptism of King Mirian, K'art'velians still conceived indigenous kingship in overtly Iranian – and not Byzantine – terms. One of the Georgians' most beloved heroes, the Christian monarch Vaxtang Gorgasali (Vakhtang Gorgasal,

¹³ T'amila Mgaloblishvili and Iulon Gagoshidze, 'The Jewish Diaspora and Early Christianity in Georgia', in T'amila Mgaloblishvili (ed.), *Ancient Christianity in the Caucasus* (Richmond, UK, 1998), pp. 39–58. For second-century burials in eastern Georgia showing traces of Christianity, see David Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia, 550 BC–AD 562* (Oxford, 1994), p. 239. The baptism of Mirian in the 320s or 330s is undoubtedly connected to the conversion of the Armenian monarchy (ca. 314).

¹⁴ Despite the ethnocentric narratives that were developed among both peoples, the conversions of the K'art'velians and Armenians were part of a larger, decades- and centuries-long process of Christianization sweeping through the Near East, Anatolia and Caucasia. Owing in part to the presence of Roman garrisons, the territories of western Georgia, including Egrisi and Abasgia, were more directly affected by Roman/Byzantine Christianity: Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity*, pp. 264–65.

¹⁵ For Armenia and Iran, see Nina G. Garsoïan, 'Iran and Caucasia', in Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change, Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, rev. edn (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 7–24; Nina G. Garsoïan, *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians* (London, 1985); Nina G. Garsoïan, *Church and Culture in Early Medieval Armenia* (Aldershot, 1999); Nina G. Garsoïan, 'Armenian Sources on Sasanian Administration', in R. Gyselen (ed.), *Sources pour l'histoire et la géographie du monde iranien (224–710)*, (Leuven, 2009; *Res Orientales* 18), pp. 91–114; James R. Russell, *Armenian and Iranian Studies*, (Cambridge, MA, 2004; Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 9); and Boghos Levon Zekiyan, 'The Iranian Oikumene and Armenia', *Iran and the Caucasus*, 9, 2 (2005), pp. 231–56.

r. 447–522), is portrayed as a Sasanian-like hero-king by his ninth-century historian.¹⁶ Suggestions that Georgia immediately and inevitably became ‘Byzantine’ in the decades or even within a few centuries after its royal conversion are patently false.¹⁷ However, the *potential* for a closer alliance was greatly enhanced by the process of Christianization. Georgia’s membership in the Byzantine Commonwealth came into full bloom only during the ‘Golden Age’ of the Georgian Bagratid dynasty, from the eleventh through early thirteenth centuries. Yet even as it stood on this lofty summit looking toward Byzantium, Bagratid Georgia remained a politically autonomous, cosmopolitan site of intense cross-cultural exchanges, convergent commonwealths and clashing imperial interests.¹⁸

Indeed, Caucasia was one of Eurasia’s most vibrant crossroads throughout pre-national times: it linked the steppes of what is now southern Ukraine and Russia with northern Iran and eastern Asia Minor. It was, moreover, a vital component of the Black Sea world,¹⁹ which itself was integrated into a transcontinental crucible of thriving long-

¹⁶ Stephen H. Rapp, Jr, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography: Early Texts and Eurasian Contexts* (Louvain, 2003; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 601, Subsidia 133), pp. 197–242; Stephen H. Rapp, Jr, ‘The Iranian Heritage of Medieval Georgia: Breathing New Life into the Pre-Bagratid Historiographical Tradition’, *Iranica Antiqua*, 44 (2009), esp. pp. 678–81; Bernadette Martin-Hisard, ‘Le roi géorgien médiéval: christianisme et influences iraniennes’, in Odile Redon and Bernard Rosenberger (eds), *Les Assises du pouvoir: temps médiévaux territoires africains* (Vincennes, 1994), pp. 129–39; and Bernadette Martin-Hisard, ‘Le roi géorgien Vaxt’ang Gorgasal dans l’histoire et dans la légende’, in *Temps, mémoire, tradition au moyen âge* (Aix-en-Provence, 1983), pp. 207–42.

¹⁷ Rapp, ‘The Iranian Heritage of Georgia’, p. 648, fn. 6 and p. 677, fn. 88. Cf. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, p. 104: ‘When they turned to Christianity, Iberia and Armenia had at the same time turned away from Iran toward Rome.’ Also cf. Elguja Khintibidze, *Georgian-Byzantine Literary Contacts*, trans. A. Tchanturia (Amsterdam, 1996), p. 5: ‘The interests of Georgian society, striving to dissociate itself from the “Oriental” – Iranian – world, were predominately directed to “Western” – Greco-Byzantine – culture and ideology. Understandably, medieval Georgia was at one with the Roman-Byzantine Christian ideology.’

¹⁸ It is worth repeating that medieval Georgia’s cross-cultural condition was by no means limited to the Iranian and Byzantine commonwealths and neighbouring Armenia and Caucasian Albania. Other prominent exchanges involved the Islamic Commonwealth and northern Caucasia, for which see B. Silagadze, *Arabî a batonoba sak’art velosbi: arabuli ĩ nobebis mixedvit* (T’bilisi, 1991); Vladimir Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History* (London, 1953); Vladimir Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* (Cambridge, 1958); Bernadette Martin-Hisard, ‘Les arabes en Géorgie occidentale au VIII^e s.: étude sur l’idéologie politique géorgienne’, *Bedi Kartlisa*, 40 (1982), pp. 105–38; and P.B. Golden, ‘Cumanica I: The Qipčaq in Georgia’, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 4 (1984), pp. 45–87.

¹⁹ Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History* (Oxford, 2004) and Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea* (New York, 1995). The notion of a sea-based zone of communication and interplay owes much to the pioneering research of Fernand Braudel, especially his *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York, 1973). See also Kären Wigen, ‘Cartographies of Connection: Ocean Maps as Metaphors for Inter-Area History’, in Hanna

distance encounter which spilled out over the Mediterranean, Red and Caspian seas and eastwards into Inner Asia. And it should be stressed that the region's variegated topography encouraged the creation of a broad spectrum of distinctive local identities. Some, like those of the K'art'velians and Armenians, proved extremely durable, in large measure owing to their flexibility. Over the long haul, then, cosmopolitanism and diversity have been constants on the Georgian – and Caucasian – historical stage.

Often the focus of academic, political, religious and public discussion in the Georgian Republic, the pursuit of internal unity – a third factor – is bound to be raised in nearly every treatment of medieval Georgian history published in the homeland. Already well entrenched in the Soviet era and a prominent subject in medieval texts, the obsession with unity has swelled since the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. During the waning years of the Soviet era tensions flared between T'bilisi and the Abkhazian Autonomous Socialist Republic, a constituent territory of the Georgian SSR. Half a year after the Soviet Union came to a legal end, Georgians and Abkhazians clashed in a bloody thirteen-month war.²⁰ Meanwhile, in 1991 and 1992 violent battles pitted the Georgian central government against South Ossetia, which had been an Autonomous Oblast' within the Georgian SSR. Both conflicts smouldered until a new round of fighting erupted in August 2008, which ended with the Russian Federation's official recognition of the independence of the two breakaway provinces. As is the case with nearby Nagorno-Qarabagh and other recent conflicts in Caucasia, the Georgians, Abkhazians and South Ossetians have all evoked the remote past in their defence.²¹ Historians, archaeologists and philologists have become key political players, and they have claimed the dual authority of both statesmen and academics.²² Pre-modern Caucasian history continues to be manipulated and rewritten for political purposes to this day.

The Georgians' fascination with unity and territorial integrity long pre-dates the question of the Soviet and post-Soviet status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Throughout its colourful history, Georgia has seldom existed as a coherent political, cultural, religious or economic entity, though Georgian Christianity has often served as a

Schissler and Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal (eds), *The Nation, Europe, and the World: Textbooks and Curricula in Transition* (New York, 2005), pp. 211–27.

²⁰ Paul Crego, 'Living on the Edge: The Republic of Georgia and Post-Soviet National Identity', *Religion in Eastern Europe*, 27, 4 (2007), pp. 2–21; Paul Crego, 'Converting Abkhazia: Issue of Religious and Ethnic Identity' (unpublished essay); and Paul Crego, 'Converting Georgians: The Ethno-histories of Anania Japaridze Metropolitan Archbishop of Manglisi and Calki in the Georgian Orthodox Church' (unpublished essay).

²¹ Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, 2001), pp. 89–98; and Philip L. Kohl, Mara Kozelsky and Nachman Ben-Yehuda (eds), *Selective Remembrances: Archaeology in the Construction, Commemoration, and Consecration of National Pasts* (Chicago, 2007).

²² One prominent example is Vladislav Ardzinba, a specialist of the ancient Near and Middle East and the first president of the largely unrecognised Republic of Abkhazia.

unifying force when the state has not. Since the medieval period, if not before, the dream of unity has preoccupied the historical imagination of the Georgian peoples, especially the often dominant K'art'velians. The first Georgian historiographical texts, which were composed by eastern Georgians around the year 800, were written in part to advocate the restoration of strong dynastic rule and, hence, political unification.²³ Figures associated with unity and independence dominate the ranks of Georgia's most popular heroes. Two of medieval Georgia's brightest stars, the Bagratid monarchs Davit' Aghmashenebeli ('the Builder', r. 1089–1125) and T'amar (r. 1184–1213), governed a powerful but short-lived empire whose nucleus was the politically and culturally consolidated Georgian kingdom. Other pre-modern luminaries, such as the semi-legendary first king P'arnavaz (r. 299–234 BC), the first Christian king Mirian III (r. 284–361), K'art'li's fourth-century female apostle St Nino and the aforementioned Vaxtang Gorgasali are likewise central to the ideal of unification in the Georgian historical imagination.

We must be conscious of the successive layers of historiographical filtering when it comes to the important question of Georgian unity, and we must also never lose sight of the fact that there was no single, homogenous 'Georgian' people in pre-modern times. Indeed, integrated and sovereign 'nations' as they exist today were absent from the pre-modern world.²⁴ Medieval vocabulary is instructive in this regard. Old Georgian *k'art'veli* (inanimate form *k'art'uli*) – that is, 'K'art'velian' – originally designated only the inhabitants of the eastern region of K'art'li (Iberia), who frequently stood at the political, cultural, religious and economic vanguard. Following the political renaissance of eastern Georgia under the Bagratid house in the ninth century, and certainly by the Bagratid union of Abkhazia and eastern Georgia in the early eleventh century, *k'art'veli* came to signify not only the K'art'velians proper but also all the 'Georgian' subjects of the Bagratid monarch. The term *k'art'veli* is still used in this manner today. During the height of Bagratid power, Sak'art'velo, a toponym invented a few centuries before, increasingly designated the all-Georgian kingdom, including – but by no means limited to – the districts of K'art'li, Kaxet'i (Kakheti), Imeret'i, Tao-Klarjet'i, Shavshet'i, Abkhazia and Svanet'i. Literally signifying 'the place

²³ Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, Part I.

²⁴ Western scholarship has largely defined nations as modern phenomena built upon forms of social communication and integration which have existed only since the late eighteenth century. Many of those who subscribe to this view (including the editors of this volume), however, envisage national identities as having been constructed upon earlier, oftentimes complex and flexible, varieties of communal identity. For the application of this definition of nations to Georgia, see especially Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington, IN, 1988). See also Stephen Jones, 'Georgia: Nationalism from under the Rubble', in Lowell W. Barrington (ed.), *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States* (Ann Arbor, 2006), pp. 248–76. On the deep pre-modern roots of nations, see Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986). See also Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002).

where the K'art'velians/Georgians dwell', Sak'art'velo is the name modern Georgians still use for their country.²⁵

These issues feature prominently in the works reprinted in this volume, which is organized around six broad thematic areas. In Part 1, four leading Caucasiologists – Cyril Toumanoff, Korneli Kekelidze, Nina Garsoïan and Bernadette Martin-Hisard – shed light on the concepts of the Caucasian *region* to which Georgia and the Georgian peoples belonged. Aspects of the royal conversion of K'art'li and the subsequent waves of Christianization are explored by Ivane Javaxishvili (Javakhishvili, Dzhavakhishvili, Dzhavakhov and so on),²⁶ Paul Crego and Stephen Rapp, Jr in Part 2. Essays by Michel van Esbroeck and Michael Tarchnishvili in Part 3 provide important perspectives on the formation of the Georgian 'national' church. In Part 4, Elene Metreveli, Zaza Sxirtladze (Skhirtladze) and Martin-Hisard investigate the rich tradition of holy women and men, martyrdom, monasticism and ascetics in medieval Georgia. Original Georgian historiography and its place in the Georgian literary canon are taken up by Zaza Alek'sidze (Alexidze) and Toumanoff in Part 5. The final section, consisting of publications by David Marshall Lang, Antony Eastmond and Rapp, addresses Georgian conceptions of royal authority and singles out two noteworthy Bagratid monarchs, one before and one after the Mongol conquest.

It is no easy task to afford a representative sense of medieval Georgia – and especially the scholarship devoted to it – through a small number of article-length publications in Western languages. The selection process was guided by the reality that this book will serve as a basic introduction to Georgian Studies for some readers. The inclusion of as many of the giants of the discipline as possible was a high priority, but by no means should the absence of a particular scholar be interpreted as a negative appraisal of her/his work. The unfortunate divergence between scholarship produced in Georgia and in the 'West' was also a chief consideration. While this volume highlights differences in approach, methodology and interpretation between the two camps, it simultaneously identifies fertile ground for future inquiry and collaboration.

Though this volume was a mutual effort, Stephen Rapp was primarily responsible for Parts 1, 5 and 6 of the introduction, while Paul Crego took the lead on Parts 2, 3 and 4.

²⁵ For *k'art'veli* and Sak'art'velo, see Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, pp. 413–40. For foreign terminology, including 'Georgia' and the Russian 'Gruziiā', see the essays in Giorgi Paichadze (ed.), *Sak'art'velosa da k'art'velebis aghmnishvneli uc'xouri da k'art'uli terminologia* (T'bilisi, 1993), with English summaries. The origin of the English 'Georgian' is uncertain; it is probably related to the Persian Gurjistan (to which the Russian can also be traced), but a connection to St George – perhaps on the part of the Crusaders – is possible.

²⁶ On the problem of rendering Georgian in Latin characters, see the 'Note on Transliteration' below.

1 Regional Contexts

Kartvelology,²⁷ or Georgian Studies, is characterized by a strong inclination to probe Georgia's history from a narrow ethno-linguistic and national point of view. While this trend afflicts the whole discipline of history, the Georgian example is unusual insofar as it cuts across a huge swath of time, in excess of a millennium, and across diverse and often competing political modes and ideologies. Though their interests and methodologies often deviate, medieval Georgian, imperial Russian, Soviet, post-Soviet Georgian and Western scholars have been united in their predilection for ethno-linguistic/national approaches. The titles of some of the few scholarly monographs in English devoted to the Georgians illustrate the centrality of nation and *ethnie*: *A History of the Georgian People from the Beginning down to the Russian Conquest in the Nineteenth Century* (1932) by W.E.D. Allen; *The Georgians* (1966) by David Marshall Lang; *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (1988) by Ronald Grigor Suny; *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia, 550 BC–AD 562* (1994) by David Braund; and *The Literature of Georgia: A History* (1994) by Donald Rayfield. This pattern is duplicated in works published in other languages, including Georgian, Russian, Armenian, French and German.

Framing history from *strict* ethno-national perspectives has rightly come under fire from many quarters. Proponents of Area Studies and the New World History, an interdisciplinary school emphasizing cross-cultural, transnational and global phenomena, have been among the most vocal. There is much to criticize, but we must acknowledge the advances made by ethno-national histories. In the case of Georgia, such research has been pivotal in drawing attention to the distinctive and ancient culture of this little corner of Eurasia. Yet, should an ethno-national focus become too compact, being deployed to the exclusion of other perspectives, especially those operating on large scales, it runs the risk of projecting its subject as a fantastically unique and privileged cultural island. Larger trends, connections, dialogues, exchanges and frameworks become downplayed, neglected and ignored.²⁸ Since academic interpretations inform social action, this is not merely an intellectual exercise. In extreme cases, xenophobes might exploit exaggerated and falsified representations in order to justify atrocities against minority groups not adhering to some professed 'norm'.

²⁷ This term is inexact insofar as it makes K'art'li and the K'art'velians exceptional among Georgia's many regions and peoples.

²⁸ Rapp, 'Chronology, Crossroads, and Commonwealths' and Stephen H. Rapp, Jr, 'Recovering the Pre-National Caucasian Landscape', in R. Büttner and J. Peltz (eds), *Mythical Landscapes Then and Now: The Mystification of Landscapes in [the] Search for National Identity* (Erevan, 2006), pp. 13–52. For later visualizations of a coherent Caucasian region, see Paula Garb, 'Ethnicity, Alliance Building, and the Limited Spread of Ethnic Violence in the Caucasus', in David A. Lake and Donald S. Rothchild (eds), *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 188–200.

In all fairness, none of the aforementioned English-language studies has entirely dispensed with Georgia's broader contexts and cosmopolitan condition: most are demonstrations of how effective and valuable ethnically and nationally centred analyses can be. It remains a fact, however, that publications conceived 'from the ground up' with regional and Eurasian vantages have been wanting. In English there are only few notable exceptions, including the single most important book in a Western language about medieval Georgian history, Cyril Toumanoff's magisterial *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (1963). This erudite monograph demonstrates the existence of a cohesive southern Caucasian region in Late Antiquity and the early medieval era. Drawing upon Arnold Toynbee and other metahistorians, Toumanoff exposes a 'Christian Caucasian civilization' whose chief components were the Christian societies of Armenia and eastern Georgia.²⁹ Additionally, Toumanoff throws light on the regional and ecumenical contexts of Caucasia and illuminates its robust connections to the Near East – especially the Iranian world of the Parthians and Sasanians – and the Mediterranean. Another giant leap forward was made by Charles Burney and David Marshall Lang's *The Peoples of the Hills: Ancient Ararat and Caucasus* (1971), a highly interdisciplinary endeavour which establishes ancient and Late Antique Caucasia, eastern Anatolia and northern Iran as a distinctive yet diverse zone of cross-cultural communication and exchange. Despite its focus on Georgian historical literature, the same philosophy drives Stephen Rapp, Jr's *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography: Early Texts and Eurasian Contexts* (2003). Building upon the work of Toumanoff and numerous other specialists, including Ivane Javakhishvili, Korneli Kekelidze and Ilia Abuladze, Rapp provides a critical intertextual and cross-cultural analysis of the surviving specimens of medieval Georgian historiography, particularly the thirteen texts preserved in the corpus *K'art'lis c'xovreba* (often mischaracterized as 'the Georgian Chronicles'). Thus, in the investigations of Toumanoff, Burney, Lang and Rapp, Georgia is vital, but its fundamental belonging to the larger Caucasian world is never lost. Medieval Georgia emerges not only as a distinctive society, but, with the larger Caucasian region, as one of the most dynamic cosmopolitan sites in Eurasia.

The first section explores facets of the broader regional and Eurasian frameworks and networks in which the medieval Georgian experience was embedded. The volume begins with Toumanoff's 'Caucasia and Byzantium' (1971). Written towards the twilight of the author's brilliant career, this essay accomplishes two critical tasks: first, it treats Christian Caucasia, and in particular Armenia and Georgia, as an integrated historical unit not only for researchers today but for medieval writers and their contemporaries; and, second, it expounds the complex and longstanding relationship between Byzantium and Caucasia. One of the lessons for scholars is that Late Antique and medieval Georgia

²⁹ For all of its strengths, Toumanoff's *Studies* does not integrate the experiences of northern Caucasia and does not extend into the Islamic period. Thus, we still lack a comprehensive study of pre-modern Caucasia along the lines of John V.A. Fine, Jr, *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, 1983).

cannot be understood apart from Armenia, and vice versa. If Toumanoff devotes substantially more space to Armenia and the Armenians, it is because of a richer set of surviving contemporary sources and the fact that the Armenians constituted the largest minority population within the Byzantine Empire.³⁰ This helps to explain, but does not justify, why Armenia has attracted vastly more attention than Georgia among Byzantinists.

Chapter 2, ‘Unity and Diversity in Medieval Caucasia, 4th–11th Centuries’, originally published as ‘Unité et diversité de la Caucasic médiévale (IV^e–XI^e s.)’ (1996), was written by Nina Garsoïan and Bernadette Martin-Hisard, leading specialists of medieval Armenia and Georgia respectively. Southern Caucasia emerges as a constant arena of imperial intervention which, at the same time, was plagued by internal breakdowns of communications and outright conflicts, especially in the Christological context. Even in moments of intense confrontation and divergence, however, one can easily ascertain how closely the experiences of the Georgians and the Armenians were bound together.

The section concludes with a short essay by one of the supernovae of Kartvelology, Korneli Kekelidze: ‘The *Chronicle* of Hippolytus (of Rome) and the Georgian Historian Leonti Mroveli’ (Chapter 3), a translation of his ‘Chronique d’Hippolyte et l’historien géorgien Leonti Mroveli’ (1964). Kekelidze isolates the initial passages of *The Life of the Kartvelian Kings* (*Cxorebay k’artvela mep’e’a*) – one of the earliest Georgian historiographical texts, now preserved exclusively in *K’art’lis c’xovreba* – in which the K’art’velians and other Georgian peoples are said to share a biblical ancestor with the Armenians and other of their Caucasian neighbours.³¹ The historical importance is twofold: first, we gain immediate knowledge about a medieval tradition of regional Caucasian cohesion; second, the sources appropriated by the medieval author reveal contemporary Georgia’s ties with the larger world. While many scholars in the Republic of Georgia continue to insist that *The Life of the Kings* was composed in the eleventh century by the Bagratid-era archbishop Leonti Mroveli (in which case the passage in question may be interpreted as a Bagratid appeal for Caucasian unity under their political banner), persuasive arguments have been advanced that Mroveli was a later editor, and that the otherwise unknown author of the text actually lived around the year 800. We shall return to Georgian historiographical literature in Part 5.

³⁰ Nina G. Garsoïan, ‘The Problem of Armenian Integration into the Byzantine Empire’, in Hélène Ahrweiler and Angeliki E. Laiou (eds), *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, DC, 1998), pp. 53–124.

³¹ The French was translated, in turn, from the Russian ‘Idea bratstva zakavkazskikh narodov po genealogicheskoi skheme gruzinskogo istorika XI veka Leonti Mroveli’ (‘The Concept of the Brotherhood of the Transcaucasian Peoples according to the Genealogical Stemma of the Eleventh-Century Georgian Historian Leonti Mroveli’), repr. in his *Etudebi dzveli k’art’uli literaturis istoriidan* (T’bilisi, 1955), pp. 96–107.

2 Christianization and Conversion

One of the supreme events in the history of Georgia is its entrance into the world of Christianity. To this day its association with the Orthodox Church is woven into the tapestry of Georgia's national identity.³² While there are also Muslim and Jewish Georgians,³³ it is Orthodox Christianity that has prevailed as a primary way in which the Georgians define themselves. Orthodox Christian identity has been part of the means by which they have maintained their separate identity in the face of waves of conquerors and would-be conquerors.

Christianity arrived in the Georgian lands from different directions over the course of many decades, and the dynamic process of Christianization of the Georgians extended over several hundred years. The conversion events of the fourth century, which were centred upon the Christianization of the K'art'velian monarchy,³⁴ occurred as Christianity itself was moving from an often persecuted religion to the faith of the Eastern Roman Empire centred at Byzantium, newly consecrated as Constantinople.³⁵ Received tradition in the Georgian Orthodox Church includes visits on Georgian territory from two apostles: Andrew and Simon the Canaanite. While reported apostolic visits of Black Sea coast settlements are not impossible, the sources are late and unreliable.³⁶ Moreover, Jewish communities, often a focus for Christian proselytization, existed in eastern and

³² Presidents Zviad Gamsaxurdia and Mixeil Saakashvili have both used Christianity as a central organizing idea in their inaugural addresses: *Sak'art'velos prezidentebis sainauguracio sitqvebi 1991–2004 clevi: krebuli* (T'bilisi, 2007).

³³ For Jews in Georgia, see Eldar Mamist'valishvili, *K'art'vel ebraelfa istoria (antikuri da p'eodalizmis xana)* (T'bilisi, 1995), with German summary, 'Die Geschichte der georgischen Juden (in der antiken und feudalen Epoche)', pp. 318–28.

³⁴ The baptism of the K'art'velian King Mirian has traditionally been dated to ca. 337, although there are other opinions. For the synchronization of Mirian's conversion with the solar eclipse of May 319, see M.Sh. Gigolashvili, R.I. Kiladze, V.J. Kukhianidze and G.T. Ramishvili, 'On the Date When Christianity Became the State Religion of Georgia', *Astronomical and Astrophysical Transactions*, 26, 4–5 (Aug.–Oct. 2007), pp. 199–201.

³⁵ It was by no means self-evident that the Constantinian settlement would hold, especially as subsequent emperors held views against the Council of Nicaea and even, as in the case of Julian, against Christianity altogether: Paul Crego, 'Converting Georgians and Abkhazians: Apostolic Visits, St. Nino, Issues of Territory, Ethnicity, Sacred Geography and Holy Lands' (unpublished essay).

³⁶ I. Javaxishvili [I. Dzhevakhov], 'Propovedniceskaia deiatel'nost' ap. Andreia i sv. Niny v Gruzii', *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago proveshcheniia*, 333 (Jan. 1901), pp. 101–13. It is noteworthy that the traditions about St Andrew and St Simon the Canaanite have become part of the historiographical battle between Georgians and Abkhazians in the post-Soviet period. See also Francis Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge, MA, 1958).

southern Georgia, including K'art'li's capital city Mc'xet'a (Mtskheta).³⁷ The sources become far more trustworthy – at least in their basic outlines – for the first half of the fourth century, when St Nino's intercession led to the baptism of King Mirian and his consort, Nana.

The texts narrating K'art'li's royal conversion, including the earliest surviving written Georgian tradition of that episode, *Mok'c'evay k'art'lisay* (which incorporates the seventh-century *Conversion of K'art'li* and the expanded ninth-/tenth-century *Life of Nino*),³⁸ find their finished product in a time when the Georgian Church had begun to emphasize its connections with Constantinople over against earlier ties to the Armenian Church. After a series of councils and debates occurring at the highest levels, the eastern Georgian and Armenian Churches definitively broke communion following the Armenians' Council of Duin III in 607/608.³⁹ Christological issues, especially the debates of the Fourth Ecumenical Council held in Chalcedon in 451, and quarrels over the jurisdiction of the Armenian and eastern Georgian Churches within southern Caucasia were the main culprits. Duin III and everything it represented greatly affected the subsequent historiographical and ecclesiastical traditions of southern Caucasia. Thus, much of what we know about the earliest period of Christian Caucasia, including the fourth-century royal conversions, has been filtered through the lenses of Chalcedon and Duin III.⁴⁰

Chapter 4, Stephen Rapp and Paul Crego's 'The Conversion of K'art'li: The Shatberdi Variant' (2006), features an English translation of the tenth-century Shatberdi redaction of the seventh-century *Conversion*, the core component of *Mok'c'evay k'art'lisay*. It also provides a detailed commentary engaging the crucial issues raised in the text, including theology, chronology, the role of women and the place of Armenians and Greeks in eastern Georgia's conversion. A later period's recollection of earlier events, *The Conversion of K'art'li* is also addressed in Part 5 below. The multilayered Georgian Cycle of St Nino – which includes *Mok'c'evay k'art'lisay* – brings together several traditions of the origin of Georgian Christianity. Nino, invariably identified as a foreigner (she is a 'captive' in

³⁷ T'amila Mgaloblishvili and Iulon Gagoshidze, 'The Jewish Diaspora and Early Christianity in Georgia', in T'amila Mgaloblishvili (ed.), *Ancient Christianity in the Caucasus* (Richmond, UK, 1998), pp. 39–58. Cf. Dan D.Y. Shapira, 'Gleanings on Jews of Greater Iran under the Sasanians (According to the Oldest Armenian and Georgian Texts)', *Iran and the Caucasus*, 12 (2008), pp. 191–216. For the earlier history of the city, see Gocha Tsetsckhladze, 'Ancient West and East: Mtskheta, Capital of Caucasian Iberia', *Mediterranean Archaeology*, 19, 20 (2006/2007), pp. 75–107.

³⁸ *Mok'c'evay k'art'lisay* is a corpus of as many as six distinct texts composed between the seventh and ninth/tenth centuries. It is named for its core component, the seventh-century 'Conversion of K'art'li'.

³⁹ Nina Garsoïan, *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient* (Louvain, 1999; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 574, Subsidia 100), pp. 283–353; and *Girk'c' l'it'oc'* (Jerusalem, 1994).

⁴⁰ Jean-Pierre Mahé, 'La rupture arméno-géorgienne au début du VII^e siècle et les réécritures historiographiques des IX^e–XI^e siècles', in *Settimane di Studio Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'alto Medioevo*, vol. 43b = *Il Caucaso: Cerniera fra Culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia* (Spoleto, 1996), pp. 927–61.

The Conversion and in Rufinus' ca. 400 account in Latin), is sometimes described as a Cappadocian woman and relative of St George. Her life continued in Jerusalem where Patriarch Juvenal and Sara, an Armenian anchoress residing in Bethlehem and a native of Duin, reportedly played a pivotal role.⁴¹ Sara became Nino's teacher, thus establishing a connection with the Armenian Church, albeit one that is extra-hierarchical. Some Armenian traditions, including the *History of the Armenians* by Movsēs Xorenac'i (Moses of Chorene), make Nino (Nunē) a disciple of St Grigor Lusavorich (Gregory the Illuminator), the apostle of the Armenians.⁴² It should be noted that while the character of Juvenal, the patriarch of Jerusalem in the fifth century, is an anachronism, his memory nevertheless opens a valuable window onto the post-Chalcedonian perspective of Christianity in southern Caucasia.

Byzantine–Greek connections became more desirable, especially for lines of authority established in the church based at Mc'xet'a, the K'art'velian capital at the time of the conversion of the monarchy and henceforth the spiritual centre of the country. Thus, Helena and her son, Constantine the Great, are featured in the received tradition, and the bishops of Mc'xet'a tapped into apostolic authority through the clergy sent from Constantinople. The Jewish community, centred in the person of Abiat'ar, was reportedly vital to St Nino's work among the residents of Mc'xet'a.

As in many Christian conversion narratives, *The Conversion of K'art'li* concentrates on the royal family. Queen Nana, cured by Nino of a serious illness, became the conduit through which her spouse, King Mirian, came to the faith. Through Mirian, our text reports, the whole realm was quickly brought to the faith of Christ – a misleading image that is altogether common in conversion stories. Within the same source, however, there are indications of the difficulty in establishing and maintaining the faith in the early years of Christianity in the Georgian territories. Following her success in Mc'xet'a, Nino preached to some of the mountain peoples at Cobeni, located on the Aragwi (Aragvi) River above the royal city. *The Conversion of K'art'li* relates that when they rejected the holy woman's Christian message, the general (*erist'avi*) accompanying her 'employed [his] sword a little, and out of fear they surrendered their idols to be demolished'. When the Quarelis found out about Nino's missionary activities, 'they fled into T'oshet'i [i.e. T'ushet'i]. They were [subsequently] found [and] King T'rdat brought and baptized them.'⁴³

The Conversion of K'art'li, its parent corpus *Mok'c'evay k'art'lisay* and other sources in the Nino Cycle narrate a relatively quick and easy conversion of the inhabitants of K'art'li and neighbouring Xaket'i, yet the Christianization of the masses was far slower

⁴¹ M. van Esbroeck, 'La place de Jérusalem dans la "Conversion de la Géorgie"', in Mgaloblishvili (ed.), *Ancient Christianity in the Caucasus*, pp. 59–74, for which see Part 3.

⁴² Movsēs Xorenac'i [Moses Khorenats'i], *History of the Armenians*, trans. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, MA, 1978), II.86, pp. 238–40.

⁴³ *The Conversion of K'art'li*, para. 19, trans. Rapp and Crego, 'The Conversion of K'art'li: The Shatberdi Variant, (Kek.Inst. S-1141)', p. 193 (p. 129 this volume).

and more varied in its impact. Certainly, the ruling classes remained under pressure to conform to Iranian political influence and, as a consequence, Zoroastrianism. The local pre-Christian gods are said to have been decisively defeated by Nino when she prayed up a windstorm that brought the 'idols' Gac'i and Gaim tumbling down.⁴⁴ The abandoning of old 'pagan' gods, however, was seldom, if ever, so easy, and pre-Christian deities often made their way into the piety of the converted. Chapter 5 'St George and the Moon-God' (1912), written by Ivane Javaxishvili, one of the pioneers of Kartvelology (and who is featured on the five *lari* banknote), examines the prominence of this saint in Georgian Christianity and how there appear to be syncretic survivals of a pre-Christian moon god in the Georgian cult of St George. Though somewhat dated, Javaxishvili's innovative interdisciplinary approach combines ancient textual evidence with modern ethnological and anthropological fieldwork and employs a sophisticated, dynamic model of religious conversion.⁴⁵

3 The Making of a 'National' Church

The Orthodox Church in the Republic of Georgia is one of the autocephalous – that is, self-governing – churches in communion with the patriarchate of Constantinople. The tradition of Georgia's church as a 'national' organization has deep roots in the medieval period and reflects a number of related aspects of its historical development.

When the K'art'velians and their neighbours converted to Christianity, the eastern 'branch' of Christianity was beginning to move beyond its ancient cultural-linguistic spheres. The earliest churches' Aramaic-speaking base found continuity in the Syriac-speaking world. A shared Hellenic and Hellenistic culture in the Mediterranean and the Near East became the linguistic milieu for the gathered writings of the New Testament and many other texts eventually considered non-canonical, if not heretical. Both of these cultural-linguistic spheres were important for the transmission of Christianity to the Georgian lands.

In the 300s Armenians, Georgians and Caucasian Albanians entered the Christian fold. Within a century, the invention of scripts paved the way for written languages into which liturgies, scripture, theology and devotional writings could be translated.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *The Life of Nino* (in *C'xorebay k'art'velt'a mep'et'a*), *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, ed. Qauxch'ishvili, vol. 1 (T'bilisi, 1955), pp. 89–91.

⁴⁵ A fuller treatment of this subject in Georgian is found in Javaxishvili's *magnum opus*: *K'art'velis istoria*, vol. 1, 3rd edn (T'bilisi, 1928), pp. 37–56, repr. in his *T'x'zulebani* (Collected Works), vol. 1 (T'bilisi, 1979), pp. 60–76.

⁴⁶ Investigations on the provenance of the Georgian script are numerous, but see esp. T'amaz Gamqrelidze, *Ceris anbanuri sistema da dzveli k'art'uli damcerloba* (T'bilisi, 1989), translated into English as Thomas Gamkrelidze, *Alphabetic Writing and the Old Georgian Script: A Typology and Provenience of Alphabetic Writing Systems* (Delmar, NY, 1994). For recent research on the Georgian

Georgian translations of lectionaries produced in the first millennium AD, in fact, remain some of our oldest proofs of the usage of scripture in Jerusalem liturgies. The evidence is featured in four volumes of the *Scriptores Iberici* of the series *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (vols 188–89, 204–205) edited and translated by Michael Tarchnishvili.⁴⁷ In recent decades, scholars have demonstrated a deeper appreciation of survivals of Jerusalemite liturgies in Georgian sources. In some cases Georgian texts are the only surviving witnesses.⁴⁸

For the Georgians, as for other Eastern Christian peoples, the attainment of a written language as a means for the creation of a sacred literature is an essential development in the realisation of a ‘national’ church. As we have seen (fn. 12, *supra*), this contrasts sharply with ‘Western’ Christians under papal jurisdiction. These Christians, who spoke a variety of vernacular languages, were generally prohibited from hearing the liturgy or the Bible in their native tongues. Before the Reformation their languages therefore never achieved the ‘sacred’ instrumentation that the tongues of Eastern Christianity did. The Georgian liturgical language was a ‘national’ unifier when political and cultural unity was sometimes still elusive. Many other verbal forms of ecclesiastical culture further defined a distinctive Georgian Christianity. Before the rise of the Bagratid dynasty in the ninth century, hagiographical literature was especially important. Georgian hymnography reached its zenith in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, just as the Bagratid ‘Golden Age’ was getting underway. Grigol Xandzt’eli (Gregory of Khandzta), Ioane Zosimē, Ioane Minch’xi, Mik’el Modrekili and Giorgi Mt’acmideli (George of the Holy Mountain – that is, Athos) are counted among the most renowned Georgian hymnographers of the period.⁴⁹

New Testament, see J.N. Birdsall, ‘The Georgian Version of the New Testament’, in B.D. Ehrman and M.W. Holmes (eds), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis (Studies and Documents)* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1995), pp. 173–87.

⁴⁷ *Le Grand Lectionnaire de l’Église de Jérusalem, V^e–VIII^e s.*, ed. Michael Tarchnishvili (Louvain, 1959–60; *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 188–89 and 204–205, *Scriptores Iberici* 9–10 and 13–14).

⁴⁸ P. Jeffery, ‘The Earliest Christian Chant Repertory Recovered: The Georgian Witnesses to Jerusalem Chant’, *Journal of the American Musicology Society*, 47, 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 1–38; and Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford, 2006; Oxford Early Christian Studies), esp. pp. 80, 118–41. See also T’amila Mgaloblishvili, *Klarjuli mravalf’avi* (T’bilisi, 1991; *Dzveli k’art’uli mcerlobis dzeglebi* 12₁), with English summary, ‘The Klardjeti Polycephalon’, pp. 466–90.

⁴⁹ Korneli Kekelidze, *K’art’uli literaturis istoria*, vol. 1, ‘Dzveli mcerloba’ (T’bilisi, 1960), pp. 134–36, 164–70, 171–73, 174–77 and 213–34; overview in Donald Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia: A History* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 12–26, p. 13 for the observation: ‘Georgia’s hymns stand at the apex of its cultural heritage. Here we have not only the ingestion of biblical Psalms, Byzantine liturgy, and spiritual poetry into Georgian, but also a personal lyrical input and, more controversially, continuity with native pagan folk-poetry.’

It would be premature to say that the fourth century witnessed the creation of full-fledged ‘national’ churches anywhere in the Christian world. It can be said, however, that the ‘national’ churches that developed from the fourth-century royal conversions in southern Caucasia became the inheritors and purveyors of a pre-modern ethno-linguistic cohesion. This was especially true when, as was so often the case, Georgia and its Christian neighbours were under the control of foreign political powers.

Georgia’s autocephaly was formed in the context of its geographical distance from Byzantium and, following the seventh-century Caucasian schism, its theological distance from the Armenian Church. The received sources which take up the issue of autocephaly pose many challenges, with the tradition of the modern Georgian Church celebrating sixteen centuries of autocephaly reaching back to the time of Vaxtang Gorgasali, a contemporary of the Byzantine emperor Zeno (r. 474–75, 476–91) and a king whose ninth-century biography has been encrusted with much legend.⁵⁰ Autocephaly is frequently read back into more ancient times based on modern definitions of the concept and on the granting of titles such as *kat alikos* (Greek *katholikos*, Latin *catholicus*) to the archbishop of Mc’xet’a. Several events are crucial for the Georgian Church’s push towards self-rule, including the break with the Armenian Church after the Third Council of Duin. The rise of Islam and especially the rapid advance of Arab armies in the second half of the seventh century moved the Georgian Church away from whatever influence or control the patriarchate of Antioch might have exercised over it.

Michael Tarchnishvili’s ‘The Origin and Development of the Ecclesiastical Autocephaly of Georgia’, originally published in 1940–41 and re-issued in 2001 by the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* in the English translation presented as Chapter 7, investigates several vital issues in the development of the Georgian Church as a self-governing body. Armenia and Antioch are two of the churches discussed, and Georgia’s evolving relationship with Constantinople also is an issue in the attainment of autocephaly. Sources for the early centuries of this connection are scarce and often ambiguous, and are therefore open to a wide variety of interpretations. It is worth noting that the establishment of a second Georgian *kat alikosate* in the medieval era has become a subject of much debate in modern scholarship, especially in terms of the hierarchical relationship of the *kat alikosate* of Abkhazia and that based in Mc’xet’a.⁵¹

In Chapter 6, ‘The Place of Jerusalem in *The Conversion of K’artl’*’, first printed as ‘La place de Jérusalem dans la “Conversion de la Géorgie”’ (1998), Michel van Esbroeck examines the role Jerusalem plays in the earliest Georgian narrative of K’art’li’s conversion and, by extension, how the Georgian Orthodox Church began its journey

⁵⁰ For an overview, see Zaza Alek’sidze, ‘K’ristianoba sak’art’veloshi andria pirvelcodebulidan dghemde’, in Rismag Gordeziani (ed.), *K’ristianobis oc’i saukune sak’art’veloshi* (T’bilisi, 2004), with English summary, ‘Christianity in Georgia from Apostle Andrew the First Called till Present Times’, pp. 35–60.

⁵¹ Buba Kudava, *Dasavle’ sak’art’velos eklesia, IX-XI ss.: istoriis me’nierebat a kandidat’i same’niero xarix’is mosapoveblad carmodgenili disertac’ia* (T’bilisi, 2002).

to a separate identity apart from its neighbours. Specifically, van Esbroeck describes the appearance in the text of the patriarch Juvenal as ‘a huge anachronism’, which he explains in the context of the reception of the Council of Chalcedon. Juvenal’s symbolism therefore speaks to one of the most important series of events in the early development of eastern Georgia’s self-government – that is, separation from the Armenian Church which chose opposition to the Council of Chalcedon. The author also addresses the legends surrounding Longinus, the Roman centurion present at Christ’s crucifixion.⁵² Notwithstanding their dubious authenticity, relics connected with this figure – especially the Tunic of Christ⁵³ – endowed the new Christians of Mc’xet’a with an intimate and direct connection with the Holy Land. They also provided an authority upon which a ‘national’ church could develop apart from other patriarchal sees, which themselves might make jurisdictional claims over the Christian Georgian territories.

4 Martyrs, Monks and Ascetics

From their beginnings, Georgian asceticism and monasticism had a strong cross-cultural and transregional dimension which served to bring Christianity in Georgia from what could have been a marginal status into the flow of events and ideas that characterized the development in the ‘Christian East’.⁵⁴ As Christianity was attaining religious dominance in southern Caucasia, monasticism was just becoming institutionalized throughout the Christian world. In one sense the rise in the Georgian lands of monastic life, both coenobitic and hermitic, was a reaction to the growing acceptance that Christianity was beginning to enjoy as a favoured religion in several kingdoms.

At the same time, eastern Georgia and the whole of Caucasia was a battleground between Eurasian empires which increasingly defined themselves by their attachment to particular religions. This trend continued after Islam replaced the Zoroastrianism of Sasanian Iran as the main rival of Christianity. Such tensions are reflected in the text widely regarded as the first original literary work in Georgian, *The Passion of Shushanik* (also called *The Martyrdom of Shushanik*), composed towards the end of the fifth century by Iakob C’urtaveli (Jacob of T’surtavi). The strife between Christianity and Zoroastrianism is personalized in the violence that the *pitiaxshi* Varsk’en, who had converted to the religion of his Sasanian overlord for political gain, visited upon his wife, the Armenian

⁵² See also Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, pp. 111–12.

⁵³ N.Ia. Marr, ‘Khiton Gospoden’ v knizhnykh legendakh armian, gruzin i siriitsev’, in *Sbornik statei uchenikov Professora Barona Viktora Romanovicha Rozena* (St Petersburg, 1897), pp. 67–96.

⁵⁴ For the importance of foreign sites in the development of Georgian culture, see Levan Menabde, *Centres of Ancient Georgian Culture*, trans. D. Skvirski (T’bilisi, 1968), which summarizes his detailed *Dzveli k’artuli mcerlobis kerebi*, 2 vols (T’bilisi, 1962); and Lamara Kajaia, ‘Georgian Manuscripts and Cultural and Educational Centers’, in Ori Z. Soltes (ed.), *National Treasures of Georgia* (London, 1999), pp. 42–46.

princess Shushanik. The medieval Armenian and Georgian versions of Shushanik's *vita* were published in 1938 by Ilia Abuladze.⁵⁵ Evstat'i Mc'xet'eli (Eustathius of Mtskheta) is another martyr enveloped in the clash between Christianity and Zoroastrianism. The hagiographical text relating his death yields rich information not preserved elsewhere, including a Gospel harmony.⁵⁶ We shall return to these texts in Part 5 below.

The 'Thirteen Syrian Fathers' are customarily credited with the foundation of the first monastic communities in Georgia at some point in the sixth century.⁵⁷ Enigmatic though they are, each came to be associated with a particular ancient monastic site, the best known of them being St Davit' Garesjeli (David of Gareja) and St Shio Mghwmeli (Shio of Mghvime). Thanks to the hard work of the Gareja Studies Centre and other research groups, the monastic complexes and Christian antiquities of the Gareja Desert east of T'bilisi have been the subject of numerous publications in recent years.⁵⁸ In his 'Martyrs and Martyria in the Gareja Desert' (2001) (Chapter 8), Zaza Sxirtladze discusses several aspects of the monastic community that grew up in the Kaxet'ian wilderness around Davit' Garesjeli's initial foundation. Sxirtladze details the various architectural monuments connected with the relics of martyrs and shows how these structures served as foci for pilgrimages to the Gareja Desert. He details with drawings and photographs the art that has survived in these structures and the way in which these martyria functioned to bring in donations that supported the life of the monks in this wilderness space. Sxirtladze also discusses the broader Georgian and international monastic context in which the Gareja complex operated.

The importance of sites like Gareja is obvious, yet the ultimate roots of the cross-cultural experience of Georgian monasticism can be traced to Jerusalem.⁵⁹ Eastern

⁵⁵ *Martwlobay shushaniki*, ed. Ilia Abuladze (T'bilisi, 1938). For a partial translation of the Georgian *vita* of Shushanik and other early Georgian hagiographical texts, see David Marshall Lang, *The Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, rev. edn (Crestwood, NY, 1976). For a translation of the Armenian variants, see *The Passion of Saint Shushanik: A New Translation of the Principal and Lesser Texts*, trans. Krikor Maksoudian (New York, 1999).

⁵⁶ J.N. Birdsall, "'The Martyrdom of St. Eustathius of Mzketha'" and the Diatessaron: An Investigation', *New Testament Studies*, 18 (1971–72), pp. 452–56.

⁵⁷ The literature on the Thirteen Syrian Fathers is large. For an overview in a Western language, see Bernadette Martin-Hisard, 'Les "Treize Saints Pères". D'une tradition hagiographique géorgienne (VI^e–XII^e siècles)', *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes*, 1 (1985), pp. 141–65 and 2 (1986), pp. 75–111.

⁵⁸ See, for example, *Samonastro č'xovreba udabnoshi: gareja da k'ristianuli agbmosavle'i = Desert Monasticism: Gareja and the Christian East*, ed. Zaza Sxirtladze (T'bilisi, 2001), with English summaries; and Sxirtladze, *Cm. daviť garejelis gansavnebeli* (T'bilisi, 2006), with English translation, *The Tomb of St. David Garejeli*, pp. 103–49.

⁵⁹ G. Peradze, 'An Account of the Georgian Monks and Monasteries in Palestine as Revealed in the Writings on Non-Georgian Pilgrims', *Georgia*, 1, 4–5 (Autumn 1937), pp. 181–246; T'amila Mgaloblishvili, 'An Unknown Georgian Monastery in the Holy Land', *ARAM*, 18–19 (2006–2007), pp. 527–39; and J. Pahlitzsch, 'Georgians and Greeks in Jerusalem (1099–1310)', in K.

Georgian monks found their way to the Holy Land by the fifth century. Perhaps the most important Georgian figure in this setting was the bishop Peter ‘the Iberian’ (Petre K^ʼart^ʼveli). Peter has attracted the attention of numerous scholars, some of whom have gone so far as to identify him as the author of the influential theological corpus of theological texts by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.⁶⁰ Living at a time when the reception of the Council of Chalcedon was not yet solidified, Peter was a champion of the anti-Chalcedonian party. In its steadfast desire to tap into Peter’s fame and to claim him as a hero of early Georgian Christianity, the medieval Georgian Orthodox Church conveniently brushed aside the bishop’s well-known anti-Chalcedonian stance. While his extant Georgian *vita* is fascinating as Chalcedonian reinterpretation, its value for the fifth century is limited.⁶¹

After this time the Monastery of the Holy Cross was for several centuries the most important Georgian foundation in Jerusalem.⁶² It was a centre for Georgian pilgrimages to the Holy Land and an important conduit for many of the liturgical rites that had their beginning in the stational liturgy of Jerusalem. Among the other prominent medieval sites of Georgian monastic activity in and near the Holy Land are St Catherine’s Monastery on Mt Sinai – where many Georgian manuscripts are still preserved – and on the Black Mountain and in the environs of Antioch.⁶³

In many respects, the most important Georgian monastic foundation outside Caucasia was the Iveron Monastery on Mt Athos in north-eastern Greece.⁶⁴ Iveron (literally ‘of the Iberians’ and sometimes rendered Iviron) was founded in the second half of the tenth century and quickly became a major centre for the translation and re-translation of received Christian texts. Chapter 10, Elene Metreveli’s ‘The Role of Athos in the History of Georgian Culture’ – originally published as ‘Le rôle de l’Athos dans l’histoire de la

Ciggaar and H. Teule (eds), *East and West in the Crusader States: Context – Contacts – Confrontations*, vol. 3 (Louvain, 2003; *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* XX), pp. 35–51.

⁶⁰ Sh. Nutsubidze, *Petr Iver i antichnoe filosofskoe nasledie: problemy Areopagita* (T^ʼbilisi, 1963), with English summary, ‘The Mystery of the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’, pp. 160–63; and E. Honigmann, *Pierre l’Ibérien et les écrits du Pseudo-Denys l’Aréopagite* (Brussels, 1952).

⁶¹ Cornelia B. Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-Century Palestine: The Career of Peter the Iberian* (Oxford, 2006); *John Rufus: The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem, and the Monk Romanus*, ed. and trans. Cornelia B. Horn and Robert R. Phenix (Leiden and Boston, 2008); and David Marshall Lang, ‘Peter the Iberian and His Biographers’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 2 (1951), pp. 158–68.

⁶² T^ʼamila Mgaloblishvili, ‘Jerusalemis cm. jvris monasteri: legende bi da sinamdville’, pp. 176–92; and Kekelidze, *K^ʼart^ʼuli literaturis istoria*, vol. 1, pp. 102–104.

⁶³ Wachtang Djobadze, *Materials for the Study of Georgian Monasteries in the Western Environs of Antioch on the Orontes* (Louvain, 1976; *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 372, *Subsidia* 48).

⁶⁴ Kekelidze, *K^ʼart^ʼuli literaturis istoria*, vol. 1, pp. 98–101; *Actes d’Iviron*, ed. Jacques Lefort, Nicolas Oikonomidès and Denise Papachryssanthou with Hélène Métrevéli (Paris, 1985– ; Archives de l’Athos, 14, 16 and 18–19).

culture géorgienne' (1983) – describes the ways in which Christian culture was mediated by the Georgian Athonite monks and how there was a lively exchange carried – literally – by the monks who travelled back and forth between the Georgian territories and the Holy Mountain. There were yet other important centres of Georgian monasticism outside the Caucasus region. Georgian monks were present in Constantinople and even in Bulgaria, at the Petriconi (Petritsoni) Monastery founded by the Armeno-Georgian aristocrat Gregory Pakourianos in Bachkovo in the late eleventh century. Petriconi's important *typikon* is specially investigated in Akaki Shanidze's *K'arf'uli monasteri bulgaref shi da misi tipikoni* (1986).⁶⁵

Back in the homeland, in addition to the early foundations, monasteries in Tao-Klarjet'i⁶⁶ in Georgia's south-west rose to prominence at about the same time as the establishment of Iveron. The Tao-Klarjet'i monasteries became centres of religion and culture at a time when central Georgian lands were occupied by the Arabs. It was also the age when the Georgian Bagratids were beginning their meteoric rise, first as clients of the Byzantine Empire and then as rulers of a growing unified Georgia that culminated in the eleventh to early thirteenth centuries. Bernadette Martin-Hisard's 'From Tao-Klarjet'i to Athos: Georgian Monks and Socio-political Realities, 9th–11th Centuries' (Chapter 9) – first published in French under the title 'Du T'ao-K'lardzheti à l'Athos: moines géorgiens et réalités socio-politiques (VIII^e–XI^e siècles)' (1983) – adds to the discussion of the ways in which the monks carried Byzantine culture to the important monasteries of Tao-Klarjet'i. This occurred when the Bagratids were moving to strengthen their power and as those monasteries were consolidating Georgian culture from its more ancient sources. Xandzt'a (Khandzta) was among the most important monastic foundations in Tao-Klarjet'i,⁶⁷ and another, Shatberdi, was one of the pre-eminent repositories of Georgian tradition in the form of manuscripts relating the history of Christianity in Georgia. The famous tenth-century Shatberdi Codex (*Shatberdis krebuli*) contains the translated works of several theologians of the early church, including Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea and Hippolytus of Rome, and preserves one of the few extant recensions of *Mok'e'evay k'arf'lisay*.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ For an English rendering, see 'Pakourianos: *Typikon* of Gregory Pakourianos for the Monastery of the Mother of God Patritzonitssa in Bačkovo', in John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero with Giles Constable (eds), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC, 2000), pp. 507–63. See also Akaki Shanidze, 'Le Grand Domestique de l'Occident, Gregorii Bakurianis-dzé, et le monastère géorgienne fondé par liu en Bulgarie', *Bedi Kartlisa*, 28 (1971), pp. 133–66; and Kekelidze, *K'arf'uli literaturis istoria*, vol. 1, pp. 104–10.

⁶⁶ Tao-Klarjet'i (Armenian Tayk' and K'larjk') was also home to a large number of Armenians.

⁶⁷ Wachtang Djobadze, 'A Brief Summary of the Monastery of St. George of Handzt'a', *Oriens Christianus*, 78 (1994), pp. 145–76; and Wachtang Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historic Tao, Klarjet'i, and Shavsheti* (Stuttgart, 1992).

⁶⁸ *Shatberdis krebuli X saukunisa*, ed. B. Giginishvili and El. Giunashvili (T'bilisi, 1979); and Mzek'ala Shanidze [Chanidzé], 'Les monuments de l'ancienne littérature géorgienne: le recueil de Chatberdi du X^e siècle', *Bedi Kartlisa*, 38 (1980), pp. 131–36.

5 Historiographical Literature

King Mirian's baptism and the subsequent Christianization of K'art'velian society spawned numerous social and political innovations, one of the most enduring of which was the creation of original Georgian literature. Although lively debate surrounds the birth of the first Georgian script, *asomt'avruli*, surviving evidence strongly suggests its invention by Christians as the fourth century gave way to the fifth.⁶⁹ What is more, this revolutionary development belongs to a larger, multiethnic endeavour which resulted in the creation of distinctive – but related – scripts for the Georgians, Armenians and Caucasian Albanians.⁷⁰ Armed with a written language, learned Christians translated biblical, patristic and liturgical texts into the local language. From the beginning, Christian Georgians living abroad in places like Jerusalem and Antioch made enormous literary contributions.

Original literature was not far behind. Towards the end of the fifth century, as we have seen, the priest Iakob C'urtaveli penned what is widely regarded as the earliest extant specimen of original Georgian literature, *The Passion of [Our] Queen St Shushanik (Camebay cmidisa shushanikisi dedop'lisay)*. As hagiography, the *vita* of Shushanik is a Christian text with an explicitly Christian message and purpose. Other original Georgian hagiographies followed, including the anonymous *Passion of the Nine Holy Children of Kola (Camebay qmat'a cmidat'ay ric'xwt' e'xrat'ay)* probably of the fifth century, the anonymous *Martyrdom of St Eustaf'i Me'xet'eli (Martvlobay mot' minebay cmidisa evstat'i me'xet'elisay)* of the sixth century and Iovane Sabanis-dze's eighth-century *Passion of St Habo (Camebay cmidisa da netarisa mocamisa k'ristesisa haboysi)*.⁷¹ Outstanding critical editions of these and all other major Georgian *vitae* have been published in the series *Dzveli k'art'uli agiograf'iuli literaturis dzeglebi (Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature)* edited by Ilia Abuladze.⁷²

⁶⁹ Cf. Levan Chilashvili, 'A Pre-Christian Georgian Inscription (from Nekresi)', *K'art'velologi*, 7 (Autumn 2000), pp. 16–24. Abundant evidence demonstrates that elite K'art'velians employed other written languages, including a local dialect of Aramaic (termed 'Armazic'), prior to Christianization: Konstantine Ceret'eli [Tsereteli], 'Armazian Script', repr. in his *Semitologiuri da k'art'velologiuri shtudiebi* (T'bilisi, 2001), pp. 419–27; and Konstantine Ceret'eli [Tsereteli], *Shenishvnebi armazis bilingvis arameul tek'stze = Zamechaniia k' arameiskomu tekstu armazskoi bilingvy* (T'bilisi, 1992).

⁷⁰ Affinities with the Ethiopic script suggest a Late Antique connection between Caucasia and the Horn of Africa, especially the Kingdom of Aksum.

⁷¹ For surveys of Georgian hagiography, see Korneli Kekelidze, *K'art'uli literaturis istoria*, vol. 1, 'Dzveli mcerloba' (T'bilisi, 1960) and the derivative volume assembled by Michael Tarchnishvili [Tarchnišvili], *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur* (Città del Vaticano, 1955; Studi e Testi 185).

⁷² See esp. *Dzveli k'art'uli agiograf'iuli literaturis dzeglebi*, ed. Abuladze, vols 1–3 (T'bilisi, 1963–71).

Given the Christian impulse of the Georgian script, it should come as no surprise that the earliest works of original Georgian literature were written by Christians as a means to define, celebrate and advance their religion. All four early hagiographies narrowly concentrate on Christian heroes, and three of them were not Georgians (Shushanik was an Armenian princess, Evstat'i an immigrant Iranian cobbler and Habo a perfumer from Baghdad), thus demonstrating that early Georgian Christianity was remarkably inclusive and was not yet obsessed with ethnicity and heresy. It should be noted that the dynasts and princely houses of eastern Georgia receive scant attention in these early sources. Rather, the focus is squarely on the Christian experience of southern Caucasia.

To the seventh century belong the first unambiguous signals of an emergent, ethnically constituted, autonomous 'national' church in eastern Georgia.⁷³ The aforementioned *Conversion of K'artli*, an ecclesiastical text showing signs of an embryonic local historiography, was written by an anonymous author at a pivotal moment in Georgian and Caucasian history. Around the year 580, the severely weakened monarchy of eastern Georgia was finally dismantled by the Sasanian Great Kings.⁷⁴ Less than three decades later, in 607/608, the prelate of the Armenian Church declared a formal schism with the K'art'velians. Although theological and especially Christological issues loomed large, the unprecedented efforts by K'art'velian clerics to construct an autonomous, ethnically centred ecclesiastical organization were just as important. The Arab conquest effectively pushed Constantinople and the Byzantine emperor further into the distance and eliminated Sasanian Iran once and for all.⁷⁵ As a church crystallized around the K'art'velian *ethnie*, *The Conversion of K'artli* was offered as tangible proof of its antiquity and, thus, legitimacy. Based on a set of evolving traditions, some of which had been transmitted orally since the fourth century, *The Conversion* commemorates the missionary activity of the holy woman Nino and the eventual baptism of King Mirian but with an eye locked on the fragile political and religious situation of the early seventh century. For the first time in Georgian history, local dynasts were brought squarely into the literary spotlight. By the tenth century several other texts, including a longer *Life of Nino*, were conjoined to *The Conversion* to form the corpus *Mok'e'evay k'art'lisay*.

Because it preserves the earliest indigenous written record of eastern Georgia's Christianization, *Mok'e'evay k'art'lisay* has often been the subject of scholarly inquiry. But the composite text is more than a conversion tale: it enshrines K'art'velian concerns and values of the authors' times, centuries after the events described. Until recently, specialists had at their disposal only two related – but sometimes divergent – versions of the corpus,

⁷³ Cf. Zaza Aleksidze, 'Establishment of National Churches in the Caucasus', *The Caucasus & Globalization: Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, 2, 3 (2008), pp. 142–50.

⁷⁴ For this date, see Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, DC, 1963), pp. 360–89.

⁷⁵ It should be noted that the earliest Georgian hagiographical texts, written in Sasanian times, report the hostility of Zoroastrian Iranians towards Christians.

one preserved in the Shatberdi Codex (tenth century) and the other in the Chelishi Codex (thirteenth/fourteenth century).⁷⁶ In the aftermath of a fire at St Catherine's Monastery on Mt Sinai in 1975, a large cache of Christian manuscripts was discovered. Among the numerous Georgian manuscripts were two 'new' recensions of *Mok'ēvay k'art'lisay*, designated N/Sin-48 and N/Sin-50.⁷⁷ Zaza Alek'sidze, former director of the Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts (now the National Centre of Manuscripts) in T'bilisi and a leading investigator of the 'new' Georgian collection, compares and contrasts the old and new variants in Chapter 11, 'Four Recensions of the "Conversion of Georgia" (Comparative Study)' (2002). The Sinai redactions generally supply a better reading of the text, Alek'sidze deduces, and they allow the reconstruction of several toponyms and ethnonyms which the Shatberdi and Chelishi manuscripts have badly corrupted. The author theorizes that no fewer than five versions of *Mok'ēvay k'art'lisay* existed before the writing of *C'xorebay k'art'vel'a mep'et'a*, a composite historiographical work associated with the eleventh-century Leonti Mroveli. Along with a rendition of *The Life of Nino* (ninth/tenth century), an early Bagratid-era elaboration of the seventh-century *Conversion of K'art'li*, *C'xorebay k'art'vel'a mep'et'a* contains two other texts: the anonymous *Life of the K'art'velian Kings* (ca. 800), our principal received source for pre-Christian Georgian history, and an untitled continuation of the latter, perhaps composed by Mroveli himself in the eleventh century. Today, *C'xorebay k'art'vel'a mep'et'a* and is preserved exclusively within the medieval corpus *K'art'lis ē'xovreba*.

The textual commemoration of eastern Georgia's royal conversion opened the door to more secularly constituted, monarch-centred texts. Composed sometime between the seventh and tenth centuries, the succinct *Primary History of K'art'li* thus reports Alexander the Great's alleged invasion of southern Caucasia and directly links to it the origins of K'art'velian kingship. *The Primary History* was one of the works incorporated into *Mok'ēvay k'art'lisay*. Drawing upon a rich oral tradition and some existing texts, perhaps including *Mok'ēvay k'art'lisay*, three anonymous authors penned the first full-blown narrative Georgian histories between ca. 790 and 813. *The Life of the K'art'velian Kings*, *The Life of Vaxtang Gorgasali* and the untitled continuation of the latter attributed to a certain Juansher Juansheriani move kingship to the centre of interest. These three sources were composed just prior to the ascendancy of the Bagratid princes in 813. Having restored royal authority in 888, the Bagratid dynasty was keen to portray itself as uniquely legitimate and as a radical departure from the K'art'velian royal past. One

⁷⁶ For the persuasive argument that the Chelishi Codex was copied around the year 1250 in Jerusalem, see Constantine B. Lerner, *The Wellspring of Georgian Historiography: The Early Medieval Historical Chronicle The Conversion of K'art'li and The Life of Nino* (London, 2004), pp. 15–22 and Constantine B. Lerner, 'On the Origin of the "Chelishi" Manuscript of the *Conversion of Kartli*', *Le Muséon*, 117, 1–2 (2004), pp. 131–36.

⁷⁷ *Catalogue of Georgian Manuscripts Discovered in 1975 at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai*, (eds) Zaza Alek'sidze, Mzek'ala Shanidze, Lili Xevsuriani and Mixeil K'avt'aria (Athens, 2005), in Greek, Georgian and English.

of the pre-Bagratid institutions it appropriated and made its own, however, was the writing of a royal-centred historiography. Indeed, the production of written history in medieval Georgia – both in pre-Bagratid and Bagratid times – was closely connected to the monarchy.⁷⁸ No later than the eleventh century, during the zenith of the medieval Bagratids, a handful of historiographical texts (excluding the short sources already incorporated into *Mok'c'evay k'art'lisay*) were combined; the result was the corpus *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, 'the Life of Georgia'.⁷⁹ While hagiographical literature flourished in the early Bagratid period in places like Tao-Klarjet'i and on Mt Athos, the lustre of new hagiographies faded somewhat as the medieval Georgian monarchy reached its pinnacle at the end of the eleventh century.⁸⁰ The message was clear: glory belonged first and foremost to the Davidic Bagratid monarchs, the most majestic of whom were celebrated as saints in their own rights. It is hardly accidental that *The Life of King of Kings Davit*, *The Histories and Eulogies of the Crowned* and *The Life of Queen of Queens Tamar*,⁸¹ three sophisticated historiographical texts commemorating the 'Golden Age' Bagratid dynasts, deliberately mimic works of hagiography.

Kartvelologists are fortunate to have at their disposal a sweeping survey of Georgian historiography down to the fifteenth century by one of medieval Caucasia's leading experts. Originally published in 1943, Cyril Toumanoff's 'Medieval Georgian Historical Literature, 7th–15th Centuries' (Chapter 12) remains remarkably current. No medieval Georgian historiographical texts have been discovered in the interim, and only a few hitherto unknown manuscripts have been identified. Among the latter are the two 'new' Sinai recensions of *Mok'c'evay k'art'lisay*. At the time, Toumanoff was also unaware of the Mc'xet'a (Q) redaction of *K'art'lis c'xovreba* deriving from 1697.⁸² This important manuscript was copied from a now-lost earlier variant just prior to the comprehensive re-editing and expansion of *K'art'lis c'xovreba* carried out by the King Vaxtang VI Commission.⁸³ For the past half century, Simon Qauxch'ishvili's *K'art'lis c'xovreba* (1955, 1959) has been the preferred critical edition of the earliest, 'pre-Vaxtangiseuli' recensions.⁸⁴ The Georgian

⁷⁸ Cf. the situation in neighbouring Armenia, where historiography was usually the domain of the various *naxarar* houses.

⁷⁹ For the strong possibility that the eleventh-century archbishop Leonti Mroveli edited and perhaps assembled the first version of *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, see Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, pp. 157–68.

⁸⁰ There were important exceptions, including the *vitae* of the Georgian Athonite fathers Iovane, Ep't'wme and Giorgi Mt'acmideli.

⁸¹ In this title *mep'e*, though translated here as 'queen', literally denotes 'king' or, better yet, 'ruler'. Georgian *dedop'ali* renders 'queen', or more properly, 'queen consort'. On the question of gender and T'amar's reign, see Chapter 14 by Antony Eastmond in Part 6 below.

⁸² A.E. Klimiashvili, 'Novyi spisok "Kartlis Tskhovreba" 1697 goda', *Moambe*, 24, 3 (1960), pp. 371–76. See also Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, pp. 17–35.

⁸³ Konstantine Grigolia, *Axali k'art'lis c'xovreba: narkvevebi sak'art'velos istoriis c'qarof mc'odnebidan*, vol. 1 (T'bilisi, 1954).

⁸⁴ *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, ed. S. Qauxch'ishvili, vols 1–2 (T'bilisi, 1955, 1959). The first volume was reprinted as *K'art'lis c'xovreba: The Georgian Royal Annals and Their Medieval Armenian Adaptation*,

Academy of Sciences has recently published a new edition, with accompanying Russian translation, of the medieval components of *K'art'lis c'xovreba*.⁸⁵ Although this edition has the virtue of incorporating variant readings of Q, an early manuscript unavailable to Qauxch'ishvili and his colleagues, Qauxch'ishvili remains the preferred text.

6 Kings, Queens and Royal Authority

The Primary History of K'art'li and the more elaborate *Life of the K'artvelian Kings*, the principal medieval Georgian texts addressing pre-Christian history, link the inception of the K'art'velian monarchy to Alexander the Great. Although many of the details of these two related sources are legendary (Alexander never actually entered Caucasia), archaeological evidence and Classical texts situate the origins of eastern Georgian kingship in the Hellenistic Age. So while the synchronism is historical enough, the avowed linkage to Alexander is not. Georgian royal authority is an ancient institution, but contrary to the assertions of starry-eyed nationalists and uncritical researchers, it was neither unchanging nor uninterrupted. It was, however, strongly dynastic, and in this sense it had far more in common with Iranian models of authority than the Roman and Byzantine. Four dynasties dominated the K'art'velian and then unified Georgian monarchy in pre-modern times: the P'arnavazids (299 BC–AD 189), a local branch of the Parthian Arsacids (189–284), the Chosroids (284–580) and following an interregnum which witnessed the emergence of several 'presiding princes', the Bagratids (888–early nineteenth century).⁸⁶

Of all these royal houses, historians have overwhelmingly favoured the Bagratids.⁸⁷ After all, the family dominated the Georgian political scene for a thousand years, down

ed. Stephen H. Rapp Jr, vol. 1 (Delmar, NY, 1998). For English translations of the bulk of vol. 1, see Robert W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History: The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles, the Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptation* (Oxford, 1996). The French translation by M.-F. Brosset and the accompanying Georgian edition of D. Ch'ubinashvili are outdated: *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIX^e siècle*, vol. 1, 'Histoire ancienne, jusqu'en 1469 de J.-C.' (St Petersburg, 1849).

⁸⁵ *K'art'lis c'xovreba* (T'bilisi, 2008), and Russian translation: *Kartlis Tskhovreba: Istoriia Gruzii*, ed. Roin Metreveli (T'bilisi, 2008). A complete English translation is planned.

⁸⁶ Many of the regnal dates of Late Antique and early medieval Georgian rulers are contested; the chief divide is between scholars in the Georgian Republic and those in Western Europe and North America. For the latter, see the meticulous genealogical researches of Cyril Toumanoff, esp. his *Studies* and *Les dynasties de la Caucasic chrétienne de l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIX^e siècle: Tables généalogiques et chronologiques* (Roma, 1990).

⁸⁷ For the Armeno-Iranian origins of the family, see especially the works of Toumanoff, including 'The Bagratids of Iberia from the Eighth to the Eleventh Century', *Le Muséon*, 74 (1961), pp. 5–42 and 233–316.

to Caucasia's annexation by tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century. As a consequence, the vast preponderance of surviving Georgian literary sources and material culture, including art and architecture, has a Bagratid-era provenance, and that which predates the Bagratids more often than not has been projected through a Bagratid filter.⁸⁸ Therefore, it is nearly impossible to avoid the Bagratids when delving into any era of pre-modern Georgian history. Yet careful scrutiny of extant sources does permit us to gain insights into the pre-Bagratid experience. For a long time it was thought – and many specialists in the Republic of Georgia continue to assert – that Georgian historical literature, particularly as transmitted in *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, was invented in Bagratid times and was monopolized by that family throughout the medieval age. As important and rich as Bagratid historiography is, essays in Parts 5 and 6 establish beyond any doubt the existence of an indigenous, pre-Bagratid historiographical tradition.

The tall shadow of the Bagratids is difficult to escape, even two centuries after the Russians abrogated the protectorate established by the Treaty of Georgievsk (signed in 1783) and their unilateral termination of Bagratid power starting in 1801. Chapter 13, Stephen Rapp's 'From *Bumberazi* to *Basileus*: Writing Cultural Synthesis and Dynastic Change in Medieval Georgia (K'art'li)' (2001), examines pre-Bagratid formulations of kingship in three ca. 800 historiographical texts, composed just prior to the accession of Ashot I. Building upon the pioneering researches of Toumanoff and Garsoïan, it draws attention to the Iranian and Near Eastern orientation of Late Antique and early medieval K'art'velian society, a condition which endured for some five hundred years after King Mirian's baptism. Rapp also exposes the prominent Iranian-like features of pre-Bagratid kingship. The monarch, portrayed as a miniature *shāhānshāh* ('king of kings'), a hero-king in the Sasanian sense, was imbued with divine glory (*didebay*, in this context equivalent to the Iranian *xwarrah*) and had scores of champion-warriors, *bumberazis*, at his command.

This royal vision is contrasted with that of the Bagratids, which drew conspicuously upon Byzantine models. By the tenth century, if not earlier, the Georgian Bagratids portrayed themselves as a radical break from the past. The family came to power with the backing of the Byzantine emperor; not surprisingly, the Bagratids reoriented Georgian elite culture towards Constantinople as never before.⁸⁹ Many prominent Iranian-like royal symbols and models were jettisoned in favour of ones that were more attuned to Byzantium and Byzantine Christianity. However, the Bagratids did not slavishly adopt Byzantine practices and ideology, including the Eusebian theory at the heart of the Byzantines' conception of imperial authority. Rather, they *adapted* them to the Caucasian environment and grafted them onto their own models and customs. Perhaps the most

⁸⁸ For art and material culture, see Antony Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia* (University Park, PA, 1998) and Wachtang Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historic Tao, Klarjeti, and Shavsheti* (Stuttgart, 1992).

⁸⁹ The reorientation towards Byzantine civilization actually began under the Guaramid presiding princes.

striking departure was the Georgian Bagratids' assertion to be in the direct biological line of the Old Testament King-Prophet David.⁹⁰

The slice of the Bagratid millennium which has attracted the greatest attention is the so-called Golden Age of the eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, when medieval Georgia attained its greatest geographical extent.⁹¹ The Bagratids combined the various Georgian and adjacent Caucasian peoples into a single kingdom, which they increasingly called 'Sak'art'velo'. Under King Davit' Aghmashenebeli, his great granddaughter Queen T'amar and other Bagratid sovereigns, Georgia became an empire for the only time in its long history.⁹² Although the Georgian monarchy's dramatic ascent sometimes brought it into conflict with Constantinople, the Bagratids' admiration for Byzantine culture persisted. This is precisely the period when the Georgian Church and state appear the most Byzantine. In his 'Royal Renewal in Georgia: The Case of Queen Tamar' (1994) (Chapter 14), art historian Antony Eastmond investigates how the Byzantine concept of royal renewal, one that was applied predominately to men, was adjusted and adapted to the Georgian milieu. Eastmond examines how T'amar and her supporters harnessed Georgian and Caucasian traditions so as to legitimize the first woman ever to rule Georgia in her own right. The memory of St Nino, the fourth-century apostle of the K'art'velian royal house, was instrumental in this development.

The Georgian Empire and unified Georgian kingdom faded with the ineffectual rule of Queen T'amar's son Giorgi IV Lasha (1213–23), the diminishing fortunes of his sibling Queen Rusudan (1223–45) and the Mongol conquest. Chapter 15, David Marshall Lang's 'Georgia in the Reign of Giorgi the Brilliant (1314–1346)' (1955), takes up one of the most important Bagratid kings of the Mongol period, Giorgi V Brcqinvalē ('the Brilliant').⁹³ Exploiting the rich numismatic record, Lang demonstrates that Mongol power in Georgia – emanating from Īlkhānid Iran – endured well into the fourteenth

⁹⁰ The *locus classicus* is Sumbat Davit'is-dze's eleventh-century tract devoted to the Georgian Bagratids: Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, pp. 337–412, with a full translation of the Old Georgian text. The Davidic claim is also found in a number of foreign sources, including the tenth-century *De administrando imperio* of the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennitos (Gy. Moravcsik (ed.) and R.J.H. Jenkins (trans.), *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC, 1967), cap. 45, pp. 204–207). For the earlier claim of ancient Jewish origins on the part of the Armenian Bagratids, see Xorenac'i, *History of the Armenians*, I.22, trans. Thomson, pp. 109–12.

⁹¹ The Georgian sources for the Bagratid 'Golden Age' are surveyed in Stephen H. Rapp, Jr's 'Georgian Sources', in *Byzantines and Crusaders in Non-Greek Sources, 1025–1204*, (London, 2007; Proceedings of the British Academy 132), pp. 183–220.

⁹² For general treatments of these reigns, see the English summaries in Roin Metreveli's *Davit' aghmashenebeli* (T'bilisi, 1990) and *Mep'e t'amar* (T'bilisi, 1991). More broadly, see Mariam Lortk'ip'anidze [Lordkipanidze], *Essays on Georgian History* (T'bilisi, 1994), 'Georgia in the XI and XII Centuries', pp. 47–188.

⁹³ For 1318 instead of 1314, see Toumanoff, *Les dynasties*, p. 525. Giorgi V was co-regnant of Georgia from 1307 to 1318 and was king in his own right from 1318 to 1346.

century.⁹⁴ Despite the wishful thinking of later Georgian historians, full Georgian unity was not restored at this time. It is remarkable that the Bagratids maintained their grip on Georgian political power, but Mongol policies and internal disputes caused the once-monolithic dynasty to splinter into several Georgian branches.⁹⁵ The talented Giorgi V made the best of a difficult situation: he sought to restore order to Georgian society by promulgating a legal code and also kept Georgia relevant on the international stage by fostering a wide range of diplomatic activity, which included contacts with the Mamluks in Egypt (who themselves had a Caucasian origin), the Byzantine rulers of Trebizond and even the papacy.

The promise of Giorgi's reign proved ephemeral. In the last quarter of the fourteenth century, Iran and southern Caucasia – especially Georgia – were brutalized by the invasions of Timur (Tamerlane).⁹⁶ The last vestiges of Byzantine political authority in Constantinople and Trebizond were swept away in the mid-fifteenth century, crushing any hope for a renewed Orthodox alliance. In succeeding centuries, the bitter rivalries of Safavid Iran,⁹⁷ the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire⁹⁸ which played out in Caucasia contributed to the further political fragmentation of the Georgian lands. Deepening rifts within the Bagratid house only aggravated the situation. Although the Bagratids managed to preserve their political domination in this tumultuous period, their authority was hopelessly divided among several competing branches. Caucasia's strategic importance for the empires of Eurasia once again proved a mixed bag for the local population. The frequent disruption of war and other manifestations of imperial competition made internal unity a reality that was hard to achieve and even harder to maintain. At the same time, Georgia's continuous interaction with Eurasian empires triggered innumerable political, cultural and economic opportunities. Thus, while the imperial Russian legacy of Georgia has taken a beating since the collapse of the Soviet

⁹⁴ The Georgian numismatic record is a valuable and underutilized source for Mongol history: Thomas A. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization Cambridge, 2001), pp. 18–23, 32–33 and so on. For Caucasia during the Mongol Empire, see Lorenzo Publici, *Dal Caucaso al Mar d'Azov: l'impatto dell'invasione mongola in Caucasia fra nomadismo e società sedentaria, 1204–1295* (Firenze, 2007).

⁹⁵ Davit' Ninidze, *Provinciis mep'eebi' XIV–XV saukuneebis sake'art veloshi (bagrationt'a sagvareulos istoriidan)* (T'bilisi, 1995).

⁹⁶ Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 71.

⁹⁷ Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Chahryar Adle, *Les Ottomans, les Safavides et la Géorgie, 1514–1524* (Istanbul, 1991); Raoul Motika and Michael Ursinus (eds), *Caucasia between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, 1555–1914* (Wiesbaden, 2000); Hirotake Maeda, 'On the Ethno-social Background of Four Gholam Families from Georgia in Safavid Iran', *Studia Iranica*, 32, 2 (2003), pp. 243–78; and Hirotake Maeda, *K'art'velebi sepiant'a iranshi: ghulamt'a of'xi ojaxis et nosocialuri carmomavloba* (T'bilisi, 2008).

⁹⁸ W.E.D. Allen and Anthony Mango, *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings (1589–1605)*, 2 vols, (Cambridge, 1970; Hakluyt Society Publications, 2nd ser., 138–39); John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London, 1908).

regime, the fact remains that Russia's annexation of Caucasia in the nineteenth century also brought certain benefits, including the opening of an unprecedented window upon Europe.⁹⁹

Editors' Note

Because the editors have maintained the punctuation of the original publications, attentive readers may note some inconsistencies among and even *within* the following selections. In most cases, Georgian transliteration has been standardized according to the style used in the introduction. However, Greek transliteration can vary significantly, particularly with regards to the nominative *-os* suffix often rendered by Latin *-us*.

⁹⁹ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, pp. 63–181.

Note on Transliteration

Georgian has been a written language since the fourth/fifth century, though some patriotic scholars have attempted to push its invention back to Hellenistic times, largely on the basis of a medieval legend preserved in *The Life of the Kings*. Georgian alphabetic scripts share certain affinities with Armenian and, to a lesser extent, Greek and Ethiopic, yet they are unique. Three related scripts have been employed over the last 1,500 years. *Mxedruli* (designated 'Mx.' below), which is still used today, became popular in administrative circles in the initial centuries of the Bagratid regime. The angular *nusxuri* (Nus.) was created at the very end of Late Antiquity so as to make writing on parchment more efficient. The oldest Georgian script, *asomt'avruli* (Aso.), was invented at the end of the fourth or start of the fifth century. Georgian does not distinguish between minuscule and majuscule letters.

Translit.	Mx.	Nus.	Aso.
<i>a</i>	ა	ⴁ	А
<i>b</i>	ბ	ⴂ	Б
<i>g</i>	გ	ⴃ	Г
<i>d</i>	დ	ⴄ	Д
<i>e</i>	ე	ⴅ	Е
<i>v</i>	ვ	ⴆ	В
<i>z</i>	ზ	ⴇ	З
<i>ē</i>	ე̄	ⴈ	И
<i>tʰ</i>	თ	ⴉ	Т
<i>i</i>	ი	ⴊ	И
<i>k</i>	კ	ⴋ	К
<i>l</i>	ლ	ⴌ	Л
<i>m</i>	მ	ⴍ	М
<i>n</i>	ნ	ⴎ	Н
<i>y</i>	ო	ⴏ	О
<i>o</i>	ო	ⴐ	О
<i>p</i>	პ	ⴑ	П
<i>zh</i> ¹	ჭ	ⴒ	Ч
<i>r</i>	რ	ⴓ	Р

Translit.	Mx.	Nus.	Aso.
<i>s</i>	ს	ⴔ	С
<i>t</i>	ტ	ⴕ	Т
<i>w</i>	ჴ	ⴖ	Ф
<i>u</i>	უ	ⴗ	У
<i>pʰ</i>	ფ	ⴘ	Ф
<i>kʰ</i>	ქ	ⴙ	Х
<i>gh</i> ²	ღ	ⴚ	Г
<i>q</i>	ყ	ⴛ	Ч
<i>sh</i> ³	შ	ⴜ	Ш
<i>ch</i> ⁴	ჩ	ⴝ	Ч
<i>c</i> ⁵	ც	ⴞ	С
<i>dz</i> ⁶	ძ	ⴟ	Д
<i>c</i> ⁷	წ	ⴠ	Р
<i>ch</i> ⁸	ჭ	ⴡ	Д
<i>x</i> ⁹	ხ	ⴢ	Х
<i>qʰ</i>	ჭ	ⴣ	Ч
<i>j</i> ¹⁰	ჯ	ⴤ	Ж
<i>h</i>	ჴ	ⴥ	Ч
<i>ō</i>	ო̄	⴦	Ж

Variant transliterations:

¹ž

²g̃, similar to Armenian *t*

³š

⁴cʰ

⁵tsʰ

⁶z

⁷ts

⁸č

⁹kh, similar to Russian *x*

¹⁰dzh, *dj*

In older and some non-scholarly transliterations, aspirated consonants are suffixed with an *h*. Thus, Thamar for Tʰamar, Svanethi for Svanetʰi. Georgian *t* and *tʰ* are rendered in Russian as *т* (т) and Georgian *j* as Russian *dzh* (дж).