

TIMES BOOKS GUIDE TO THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE
THE PEOPLES OF THE CAUCASUS AND URALS

PART 1: THE CAUCASUS

INTRODUCTION

The relatively narrow isthmus that divides the Black Sea from the Caspian Sea is a fabled land of stupendous snow-capped mountains (including Mt. Elbrus, Europe's highest peak), lush valleys, fast-flowing rivers and rolling meadows, encompassing a variety of micro-climates. The economy is largely land-based, with important oil-production in Azerbaijan and Chechenia. It is also the continent's most complex region in terms of ethno-linguistic composition. The chain of the Greater Caucasus runs for some 500 miles between the two seas and is often regarded as Europe's natural southern boundary. However, the content of the present chapter is determined by the alternative view, whereby Asia is deemed to begin only with the crossing of the former Soviet Union's Transcaucasian frontiers, though, in many ways it would be preferable to treat the Caucasus, both North and South, as belonging exclusively to neither Europe nor Asia. Until the collapse of the USSR it was almost impossible for Westerners to gain permission to visit any part of the North Caucasus, and so the learning-process must be bi-directional: West of the (North) Caucasus and (North) Caucasus of the West.

The Caucasus is home to: (a) the autochthonous peoples themselves, who collectively speak some 40 languages, divided into certainly three and possibly four language-families (namely: 1. Daghestanian, or North East Caucasian; 2. its clear relative North Central Caucasian; 3. North West Caucasian, all three families perhaps deriving from a single, very remote ancestor; 4. South Caucasian, or Kartvelian, which family has no demonstrable genetic links with any of the northern groups let alone any other language or language-family still spoken or extinct); (b) speakers of a number of Indo-European languages (namely: Ossetes/Ossetians, Tats, Talysh and Kurds, all four of whom speak languages related to Persian; Armenians; Greeks; Gypsies; and, of course, Russians and other Slavs including the Cossacks, who first appeared in the Caucasus area only in the second half of the 16th century); (c) a variety of Turkic-speaking peoples such as the Turks themselves, Turkmens, Karapapaks and the Azerbaijanis in Transcaucasia, plus the Karachays and Balkars in the NW Caucasus, and the Nogais and the Kumyks in the NE; north of Daghestan

are the Mongol Kalmyks; (d) the Semitic peoples (a small Assyrian group in Georgia, and Jews, amongst whom the Mountain Jews of Daghestan speak Tat).

This section will concentrate on those peoples whose main homeland is the Caucasus and is sub-divided by language-group, even if there is no one-to-one correspondence between language and race. Apart from the Nogais with their Mongol features, all native Caucasians manifest the physical characteristics of the southern branch of the European race; dark tints in the eye and hair predominate with an almost total lack of concave forms to the nasal bone and with a strongly developed tertiary hair-integument. Grossly speaking, the Circassians are perhaps the fairest skinned, the Armenians especially swarthy. Generous hospitality (even by eastern standards) towards guests is characteristic of all the indigenous peoples, as is respect for the dead and the resting-places of ancestral bones. The traditional male tunic (cherkesska), usually black with cartridge-pockets along the breast and never worn without the dagger (khinjal), was taken over by the Cossacks but is really only seen today adorning members of national folk-dancing troupes. The blood-feud was the age-old custom of settling scores and has vestigially survived to the present day in places (perhaps to re-surface as the social order collapses?). Emerging from 70 years of Soviet rule these peoples are all faced with demanding struggles to re-shape their societies from the very top to the very bottom; even ethnic identity may be uncertain, let alone such peripheral features as educational, judicial and political systems. Had the West taken a genuine interest in understanding and helping the Caucasus in the dying days of Soviet power, some of the awful conflicts that have disfigured the region might well have been avoided.

South Caucasians

Of the four Kartvelian peoples the Georgians, Mingrelians and Svans live almost exclusively within the Republic of Georgia (Georgian *საქართველო*, capital Tbilisi), whilst the fourth, the Laz, live mainly in their traditional homeland along part of Turkey's Black Sea coast, with only negligible numbers resident in Georgia. The final Soviet census (1989) gave a total population for Georgia of 5,400,841 of whom 3,787,393 were listed as 'Georgians' (= 70.1%). However, it has been the practice since around 1930 artificially to inflate the number of so-called 'Georgians' by officially classifying under this term all Mingrelians and Svans. Thus, not only have all censuses post-1926 been effectively vitiated but the true demographic picture for Georgia remains a mystery; equally uncertain is the state of first- and second-language knowledge among the Kartvelians -- there

may be as many as one million ethnic Mingrelians, who traditionally live in Western Georgia's lowlands (capital Zugdidi) forming a buffer between the Abkhazians and the Georgians proper, though not all will necessarily speak Mingrelian. Nestling above Mingrelia in a mountain-fastness of unsurpassable beauty that is covered by a thick blanket of snow for over half the year lies Svanetia (capital Mestia), which prior to the calamitous winter of 1986-87 could boast a population of perhaps over 50,000, though later almost half of the residents of Upper Svanetia reportedly moved to the relative safety of lowland districts, where nationalists proposed they be resettled among some of the non-Kartvelian citizenry of Georgia so as to help spread knowledge of Georgian! Of the four sister-languages only Georgian has literary status. Under the Soviet system this meant that it was both written and taught -- indeed, as the chief language of a union-republic it could have served as the language of tuition from nursery through university for anyone educated at a Georgian-language school, as all Svans and most Georgians and Mingrelians were. Russian-language schools tended to be used by Georgia's non-Kartvelians, though the first few grades of schooling might have been in another of the USSR's literary languages, which explains why knowledge of Georgian among the republic's non-Kartvelians was never widespread. The clearly stated intention to make knowledge of Georgian universal in an independent Georgia coupled with the lack of concern in Tbilisi for the welfare of any of the republic's other languages helps to explain some of the difficulties that began to mar Georgia's moves towards independence as early as 1989. Attempts by the Russians at the end of the 19th century to create an alphabet for Mingrelian based on Cyrillic along with a Mingrelian liturgy were strongly opposed. Equally hostile was the reaction from Georgians (and even some leading Mingrelians!) to calls in the 1920s for a Mingrelian script based on Georgian characters, though the early 1930s did see a daily Mingrelian newspaper produced for the region's capital.

Georgia's conversion as a state to Christianity by St. Nino is dated to the 330s, though missionaries had already converted some of the coastal Greek colonies in Abkhazia, Mingrelia and Lazica, which together roughly formed the land the ancients knew as Colchis. The invention of the unique and handsome script, of which three variants have been used down the centuries, is assumed to have occurred a few decades later in order to facilitate the dissemination of church-literature. A writing tradition of 15 centuries has provided Georgia with a wealth of literature, sadly little known outside Georgia itself, for all genres -- the study of Old Georgian is important for anyone concerned with the transmission of Biblical texts. The Georgian Church is an autocephalous branch of Eastern

Orthodoxy, though during Georgia's subordination to Tsarist Russia its Church too became subject to the Russian branch of Orthodoxy. Following the Council of Chalcedon's proclamation on the dual nature of Christ (451) the Georgian Church (along with that of the Armenians and the 'lost' Caucasian Albanians, the third Christian nation located in the east of Transcaucasia with their own script and literature who simply disappeared from the pages of history) defended the monophysite view, but in 607 Georgia broke with its neighbours and adopted the diophysite position. Some ethnic Georgians in those areas bordering Turkey converted to Islam at the height of Ottoman Turkish influence; today Muslim Georgians live primarily in the province of Ach'ara (Ajaria), whose capital is Batumi. Nationalists tend to regard adherence to any religion other than Georgian Orthodoxy as essentially counter to the spirit of being a Georgian. In November 1944 over 100,000 Muslims from the neighbouring border-region of Meskheta were deported to Central Asia. Their return has always been blocked by the Georgian authorities, and the ethnic status (Islamicised Georgians vs ethnic Turks) of the majority is hotly debated.

Heavily influenced by Greeks, Romans, Persians and Arabs, who entered eastern Georgia in 655 and eventually established an emirate in Tbilisi that lasted until 1122, Kartvelian lands plus some neighbouring territory were unified in 975 under Bagrat III. The Seljuk Turks, recently arrived from their Turkestan homeland, attacked Georgia in 1065, and it fell to David IV, The Builder (1089-1125), to secure the frontiers, setting the seal for the Golden Age under Queen Tamar (1184-1213). Her reign saw the creation of the national epic, Shota Rustaveli's *Man in the Panther's Skin*, consisting of some 1,600 end-rhyming quatrains. Political power and cultural activity were soon extinguished with the appearance of the Mongols; many treasures, including manuscripts, were secreted in Svanetia. After this threat subsided, Georgia fragmented into small kingdoms and princedoms, which became prey to Ottoman Turks in the west from 1510 and to the Persians in the east. The Treaty of Giorgievsk (1783) with Russia led to the annexation by Russia of Eastern Georgia in 1801; Mingrelia followed in 1803 and the western kingdom of Imereti in 1804. Georgian language and culture were repressed for most of the century, and it was only the activity of such intellectuals as Prince (now Saint) Ilia Ch'avch'avadze (1837-1907) that bred a (renewed?) sense of national self-awareness. Independent under a Menshevik government (1918-1921), Georgia was forced into the Soviet Union by the decisions and actions of the Georgians Joseph Jughashvili (aka Stalin) and Sergo Orjonik'idze. Fiercely nationalistic, anti-Russian and adept at playing the system, the Kartvelians, though not immune to the Terror of the 1930s, lived

extremely well by Soviet standards, and Georgian language, literature and arts flourished, the Rustaveli Theatre Company under Robert St'urua, the Sukhishvili-Ramishvili Dance Ensemble and the local film-industry gaining thoroughly deserved world-wide reputations. The waning of Soviet power was accompanied by a deplorable descent into chauvinism, which was calamitous in such a demographically heterogeneous republic (indeed shortly before his death Andrei Sakharov described Georgia as one of the USSR's 'little empires'), with significant minorities dotted around its borders -- as late as 1900 Tbilisi itself was largely an Armenian-Russian town. Wars between Kartvelians and both South Ossetians and Abkhazians scarred the immediate post-Soviet period, with an intra-Kartvelian conflict between Mingrelian supporters of the ousted (Mingrelian) president Zviad Gamsakhurdia and followers of his arch-enemy Eduard Shevardnadze, former KGB operative and notoriously pro-Russian Party Boss in Georgia (1972-1985), brewing in the economic ruins of Georgia in the autumn of 1993, all of which points to the essentially illusory nature of the century-old dream of a united Georgia. Rabidly anti-Russian the Georgians rejoiced in their refusal to join the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States, though a hint of a crack in this stance appeared at the end of September.

The provinces, as is typical of a mountainous country, have developed often sharply differentiated dialects and local varieties of traditional dress, food, architecture, dance, music and regional temperament -- Gurians (in the west), whence hails Eduard Shevardnadze, are viewed as even more fiery-tempered than the rest of a volatile race, Rach'ans (north-west) as slow-witted, K'akhetians as laid back, Imeretians as eloquently fast-talking, Mingrelians as simpletons. Kartvelian music is intricately polyphonic, Svan songs mirroring mountain-conditions in their austerity, whilst complex Mingrelian harmonies so intrigued Stravinsky that he claimed to want to be reborn a Mingrelian! Basically a rural economy (citrus, viticulture, maize, tea, animal-husbandry, wool and textiles), some mountainous regions (such as Khevsureti) have been depopulated by urbanisation. Georgia historically had a higher percentage of nobility than other areas of the Caucasus, but relations with the peasantry were cemented by the practice of fostering aristocratic children among peasant-families -- indeed, networks of relatives, friends and acquaintances have remained pivotal for the running of society even through the Soviet period. Kartvelians' celebrated *დასადასობა* (though Svans tend to be more diffident) may conceal from casual observers such less appealing aspects of their character as an over-developed sense of ethnic superiority, an unwillingness to accept criticism, and, in the words of England's first professor of Georgian studies, the late David Lang, «a

proneness to harbour rancour». Rich in folklore, the Georgians' Prometheus-figure is called Amiran, whilst the main figure in Mingrelian demonology is the *აქაკ'ბაწი* 'monster-man'; important to the Svans are the fertility-deity *ბარბა* and the goddess of the hunt *აბი*. All Kartvelians share a love of the feast (*კაჭი*), where such delicacies as *კახ'ბაწი* 'cheese-bread', *კ'ბაკ'ის მურაბა* 'walnut-preserve', and *აქაკ'ბაწა* 'string of walnuts coated in dried grape-juice' may be eaten and a multiplicity of local wines (so crucial to the ritual of seemingly endless toasting) imbibed, amongst which pride of place surely belongs to (K'akhetian) Kindzmarauli or (Rach'an) Khvanch'k'ara, Stalin's favourite.

North West Caucasians

This small group comprises Abkhaz-Abazinians, Circassians and Ubykhs, though no Ubykh has lived on native soil (centred around the Black Sea resort of Sochi) since 1864, and the language became extinct in October 1992 with the death of the last speaker, Tevfik Esenç, in Turkey. North West Caucasian territory once stretched from the banks of the Kuban (and possibly the Don) in the North West Caucasian plains across the mountains and along the coast of Abkhazia down to the frontier with Mingrelia -- toponyms hint at an even earlier presence further south in Georgia. The Russo-Caucasian war of the 19th century decimated these peoples, leaving merely a rump-population in the Caucasus and producing a tragic diaspora that remains almost totally unknown to the Western world.

Christianity, largely supplanted by Islam, never wholly displaced certain pagan beliefs, and a special affection for trees still survives, *Мазары* being the Circassian god of the forest. In the Caucasus itself neither Christianity nor Islam has today any significance. The Abkhaz word for 'God' (*Ах'а*) is etymologisable as the plural of 'mother' (*а*) and may indicate a one-time matrilineal society, perhaps reflected in the predominant role of the heroes' mother Satanay Gwasha in the Abkhaz version of the pan-North Caucasian folk-epic *The Marty*, which has even penetrated into the folklore of the Svans and Rach'an Georgians. The Abkhazian Prometheus is *Абрык'а*. The traditional moral code of the mountaineer is strong among the North West Caucasians, Circassians being renowned for their honesty throughout the Near East -- in Jordan they form the king's ceremonial bodyguard. Respect for the elderly and closely-knit extended families are still the norm, marriage with anyone sharing the surname of either parent being forbidden. Skill in horsemanship served the men in battle and the hunt, secret hunting languages being once used to prevent the prey understanding the hunters' intentions! Intricate designs in embroidery and carving are found in Circassia. Maize-mush is the staple food (Abkhaz *აბართა*,

Circassian *мэщхэ*). Pre-revolutionary Abkhazian society was rigidly hierarchical; pre-1864 Circassia had no central authority, the Abzakhs, Shapsugh and Natukhays having a republican system, the remaining tribes being feudal.

In 1989 93,267 Abkhazians, famed for their longevity and love of yoghurt, lived in Georgia's Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (capital Sukhum, in Abkhaz *Аԥԥ*), representing a mere 17.8% of Abkhazia's population. Across the Caucasus in Russia's Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Region (capital Cherkessk) there were 27,475 Abazinians (6.5% of the population). There were some 125,000 Western Circassians (Adyghe), of whom 95,439 constituted 22% of the population in the Adyghe Autonomous Region (capital Maykop), most of the others living in the Krasnodar District, including 10,000 Shapsugh around Tuapse (Two Rivers in Circassian). East Circassians are divided between Karachay-Cherkessia, where they are termed Cherkess and numbered 40,230 (9.6% of the population) in 1989, and the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Republic (capital Nalchik), where they are termed Kabardians and numbered 363,351 (48.2% of the population). The North Caucasian administrative units were granted republican status by the post-Soviet Russian Federation. Circassian women have long had a reputation for great physical beauty and were prized in the Turkish harems. It is believed that over one million Circassians and maybe half a million Abkhazians live in Turkey and other areas of the Near East.

All three mutually unintelligible languages in the group are notorious for their fearsome phonetic and structural complexity. Apart from occasional word-lists going back to the 17th century, documents in these languages are no older than the mid 19th century, when first attempts were made to write Circassian and then Abkhaz. The early Soviets created four literary languages: Abkhaz (based on the Abzwa dialect), Abaza (based on T'ap'anta), West Circassian (based on Temirgoi), and East Circassian (based on Kabardian). The first Soviet script for Abkhaz continued the Cyrillic-based version already employed, which yielded to a Latin form in 1928 during the Soviet Latinisation-drive (the Georgian-Scot linguist Nikolai Marr having used his own horrible system in his 1926 dictionary). When most of the USSR's Young Written Languages shifted to Cyrillic scripts in 1936-38, Abkhaz significantly had to adopt a Georgian-based alphabet, which was abandoned after the death of Stalin in favour of today's Cyrillic-based variant. Abaza had a Latin script created in 1932 but went over to a Cyrillic variant (different from Abkhaz!) in 1938. West Circassian used a form of Arabic script until replaced by a Latin version in 1928, which yielded to today's

Cyrillic-based orthography in 1938. Kabardian replaced Arabic with Latin in 1924, adopting a form of Cyrillic (different from West Circassian!) in 1936. None of the current scripts is user-friendly, and there is the possibility of a new reversion to Latin; ideally one universal alphabet should serve all branches of North West Caucasian.

Abkhazians make their first indisputable appearance in history at the dawn of our era under the classical term 'Apsilian' -- they call themselves *Аԥсуа* The Abazinians, then still living in Abkhazia, were the Greeks' Abazgians. A series of relations with Lazika and Byzantium saw Christianity introduced under Justinian (543-46) and led in the late 8th century to Leon II establishing the Kingdom of Abkhazia, which incorporated the whole of western Georgia, such that from 780 to 975 the term Abkhazia actually referred to all this territory. In the 14th century the first wave of Abazinians crossed the Klukhor Pass into the North Caucasus, the rest following after the 17th century. When Georgia fragmented in the wake of the Mongols, Abkhazia became a separate principdom under the Chachba (Shervashidze) family. Subsequent centuries witnessed Abkhazia either at war or in alliance with the Mingrelia of the Dadiani princes. Ottoman Turkish influence led to part of the population adopting Islam. In 1810 Abkhazia entered the protectorate of Tsarist Russia but administered its own affairs until 1864. It is estimated that the Russians, especially after 1864 and the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, expelled over 120,000 Abkhazians to Ottoman lands, which caused wholesale depopulation and the start of the still ongoing influx of non-natives. The Soviets gave Abkhazia full republican status in 1921, and in 1922 Abkhazia entered the Transcaucasian Federation in special treaty-alliance with Georgia, the other two members of the Federation being Armenia and Azerbaijan; this Federation formed a block within the USSR until 1936 when the three Soviet republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were awarded separate status. In February 1931 Stalin reduced Abkhazia's status to that of a mere autonomous republic *within* Georgia. His Mingrelian lieutenant, Lavrent'i Beria, then began a georgianisation-drive, which included wholesale swamping of the Abkhazians on their native soil by forced importation of largely Mingrelians, replacement in 1945 of all Abkhaz-language schools by Georgian-language schools plus a ban on Abkhaz publications. Whilst Abkhazians living alongside Mingrelians tend to speak Mingrelian, essentially only those educated during the 1940s know Georgian. Memories of this period, the renewed chauvinism in Georgia from the late 1980s and Georgia's annulment of all Soviet legislation, which defined Abkhazia's subordination to Tbilisi, led to Abkhazian attempts to safeguard their language and culture by temporarily re-instating on 23 July 1992 their 1925

constitution and seeking to secure a new federative treaty with the Georgians. Their reward was to be invaded by order of Eduard Shevardnadze on 14 August 1992. The subsequent year's war of atrocities must place any new coöperation with Tbilisi in grave doubt.

Christianity came to Circassia at the same time as Abkhazia, just as the Ottoman Turks eventually sought to convert both to Islam. Circassians had links with Byzantium and, from around 1175, trading and cultural ties with Italy. Circassia did not suffer as much as other Caucasian regions under the Mongols but was invaded by Tamerlane at the close of the 14th century, trade with Italy ceasing with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Population-movements following the waning of Mongol power brought Circassians further to the south-east, pushing the Ossetes eastwards in the process. The 13-14th centuries also probably saw the formation and settlement high in the Caucasus of the Karachay-Balkars, supposedly an admixture of Caucasian, Iranian Alan, and Turkic Kipchak stock. The Karachay-Balkars, though separated by Elbrus and divided into different administrative regions, share a common language, which was given a Cyrillic script in 1936 and is of the Kipchak Turkic variety, closely related to Kumyk and Nogai. The first contacts between Circassians and the Russians on their relentless advance southwards occurred in the 16th century when Cossack stations started to be planted as bulwarks against the mountaineers -- Ivan The Terrible married a Kabardian princess. Some date the start of the war against Circassia to Russian activity around Mozdok in 1763, but matters came to a head with the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829, when Turkey ceded 'her' Caucasian territories to Russia -- the Circassians never acknowledged Turkey's suzerainty and thus her right to hand their land to the Russians. The horrors of the war that then developed/intensified can be seen in the vivid and strangely moving contemporary descriptions of such British travellers as James Bell, Edmund Spencer and J. Longworth. Final defeat came in 1864, when perhaps half of the North West Caucasians (mainly Circassians, all the Ubykhs, and many Abkhazians, who were the only Transcaucasians to fight against Russian seizure of the Caucasus) preferred Ottoman exile to Russian domination, thousands perishing in the hasty, ill-organised exodus. Once fertile Circassian mountain-slopes turned barren in the hands of Slavs, ignorant of the techniques of cultivation. Remembrance of this shared tragedy conditioned the Circassian (and indeed pan-North Caucasian) support for the Abkhazians in the face of the renewed Georgian threat in 1989, when the Assembly (Confederation as of November 1991) of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus was formed. Volunteers from this semi-official organisation of sixteen peoples proved a

crucial counterweight to the Georgian forces in the Abkhazian war of 1992-93. Both Circassians and Abkhazians hope for a large-scale return to the homeland from their diaspora-communities to help in both post-Soviet reconstruction and consolidation of their fragile cultures. The Confederation, which while incorporating some Muslim peoples should not be regarded as Muslim in orientation, has not been joined by the North Caucasian Turkic peoples, and the desire expressed by the Karachays and Balkars to re-establish states independent of their (East) Circassian neighbours, as a possible preliminary to unification, is yet another ominous sign for any future united and secular North Caucasus itself independent of Russia.

North Central Caucasians

This group comprises Chechens, Ingush and Bats. It is sometimes referred to as Nakh (or Veinakh), meaning 'people' (or 'our people'). The Chechens' self-designation is *Мæхъæлæ* that of the Ingush *Гъæдзъæлæ* that of the Bats *Баттæ*; the better known designations for the first two deriving from Russian adaptations of names of two local villages (auls). Chechenia (capital Groznyj) and Ingushia (capital Nazran) together formed the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic before the break-up of the USSR, though they were separate in the early Soviet period. In 1989 the Soviet Chechen population was 958,309, whilst that of the Ingush was 237,577, of whom 734,501 Chechens and 163,711 Ingush lived in their autonomous republic, constituting 70.7% of its population -- Chechen villages are also to be found in Turkey and Jordan. No figures are available for the Bats, who reside in a single village, Zemo Alvani, in the Eastern Georgian province of K'akheti, where they all also speak Georgian; earlier they lived in the mountainous region of Tusheti, from which comes their Georgian designation of Ts'ova Tush. They number perhaps 5,000 and have been classified as 'Georgians' in recent censuses! Their language is unwritten, has been heavily influenced by Georgian and is destined for extinction, unless the Georgian authorities take steps to save it -- a fanciful scenario.

The various dialects of Chechen and Ingush are mutually intelligible, and yet both exist as separate literary languages. First attempts to write Chechen employed Arabic characters. In 1925 a Latinized script was introduced, replaced in 1938 by Cyrillic. A new Latinized version was introduced by the Dudaev regime in 1993. Ingush used Latin as a base for its script from as early as 1923, shifting to Cyrillic in 1938.

Fundamentally pagan, the Chechen-Ingush underwent some Christian influence from Georgia after the 10th century, but Chechenia gradually yielded to Islam (Sunnis of the Hanafi school), slowly introduced by Avars and Kumyks from the 16th century; it was only in the latter half of the 19th century that the Ingush were converted by Sufi Qadiri missionaries. The Sufi *ṭarīqā* a most conservative form of Islam, partly defines self-identity to the present day, and the organisation of the Sufi order coalesces well with the prevailing social structure, based on the all-pervading system of clans (*ṭarīqā*), which often cut across the Chechen vs Ingush divide. Khevsurian, Pshavian and Tush folklore in Georgia is replete with battles with the Kist's, as they term the Chechen-Ingush just over their border. Religious fervour combined with the mountaineers' love of liberty has defined relations with Russia (Tsarist, Soviet, post-Soviet) for over two centuries.

The great North Caucasian insurrection against Russian encroachment in 1783 was led by the Chechen Naqshbandi Sheikh Mansur. The Chechens were particularly fierce in their resistance during the long 19th century war, losing much of their forests to wilful Russian destruction in the process. Continuing resentment of foreign (now Soviet) control along with actual rebellions in the 1920s and 1930s resulted in their most recent tragedy. Falsely accused of collaboration with the Nazis, who were keen to gain control of the Groznyj (and Baku) oil-fields, the Karachays (Oct-Nov 1943), the Chechen-Ingush (Feb 1944) and the Balkars (March-April 1944) (plus the Koreans, Volga Germans, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars and the Meskh(et)ians) were transported in their entirety to the wastes of Central Asia. It was as though these peoples had never existed, their territories disappearing from Soviet maps; most of Karachaia (not linked to Cherkessia at the time) and parts of both Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechen-Ingushia were bestowed by Stalin upon his native republic, Georgia, whilst the Ingush Frigorodnyj Raion went to North Ossetia. Teaching of their native languages during the Central Asian exile was prohibited. It was only in the late 1950s that these peoples (though not the Germans, Tatars or Meskh(et)ians) were allowed to return home by Krushchëv and their territories largely restored. Georgia, no longer with so eminent a Kremlin patron, gave up all territorial gains, though Karachaia was forced into union with the so-called Cherkess. North Ossetia, however, was allowed to retain control of its extra land, even though Ingush were permitted to resettle there. Many Chechens and Ingush are still to be found in Central Asia. Given this recent history, it is hardly surprising that the post-Soviet Dudaev regime took the earliest opportunity to declare independence from Moscow. The Ingush subsequently broke away from

the Chechens, believing that Moscow would then view with greater favour their claims for return of their lost land -- it did not, and reunion with Chechenia is a distinct possibility; the ongoing dispute with North Ossetia has cost many lives since 1991 and is the greatest single internal problem for the North Caucasian Confederation, which counts both Ingush and Ossetes as members. The Chechens' territorial difficulty with Daghestan, another inheritance of the deportations, has been peacefully resolved. Relations between Chechenia and Georgia are complicated by the Chechens' unfailing support for Abkhazia and by the fact that Zviad Gamsakhurdia, ousted as president of Georgia in January 1992, took refuge in Groznyj as guest of President Dudaev.

Chechens (along with the Georgians) have the reputation of being the prime movers in the organised crime networks that are flourishing all over former Soviet territory. Western media reinforce these stereotypes by emphasising the number of expensive limousines and weapons openly flaunted on the streets of Groznyj. Reports, probably emanating from anti-Dudaev (if not anti-Chechen) sources, even circulate of the government itself siphoning off oil-revenues and thus impoverishing the state. A representative of the other side, with little opportunity to put its case, offered this defence in June 1993: 'Every Caucasian male regarded it as his birth-right to possess both a gun and an eye-catching horse, no matter what the cost; it is not the possession but the (mis)use of weapons that should occasion criticism. The modern equivalent of the horse is the car, and making sacrifices to purchase an attractive one does not necessarily imply involvement in racketeering. In a land-locked country the only outlet for the basic export, oil, is the railway-link through Russia, so that all sales are controlled by the very authorities who, in response to Chechenia's unwelcome declaration of independence, imposed a financial blockade, refusing to pay its own huge oil-debt to Chechenia.'

North East Caucasians

Daghestan (capital Makhachkala) is indeed a veritable 'Mountain of Tongues', as the Arabs styled it. Multi-lingualism is common throughout the Caucasus but can take formidable proportions in Daghestan, where it has been noted that denizens of the highest areas usually also speak the language of the group living beneath them, and so on down to the lowlands. The indigenous languages, some of which extend southwards beyond Daghestan itself, are given below, with 1989 census-data in brackets -- where no figures appear, this is because the speakers, who may number anything from a few hundred to a few thousand, classify themselves according to the ethnic group of one of their other languages (e.g. 'Avars'

include all speakers of both the Andic and Tsezic languages). Soviet literary languages are asterisked:

Avaro-Ando-Tsezic Group, comprising:

Avaric

*Avar (604,202)

Andic

Andi

Botlikh

Godoberi

Karata

Akhvakh

Bagvalal

Tindi

Chamalal

Tsezic

Tsez (Dido)

Khvarshi

Hinukh

Bezhta

Hunzib

Lako-Dargic Group, comprising:

Lakic

*Lak (118,386)

Dargic

*Dargwa (365,797)

Kubachi

Chirag

Lezgian Group, comprising:

*Lezgian (466,833)

*Tabasaran (98,448)

Rutul (20,672)

Tsakhur (20,055)

Agul (19,936)

Udi (8,849)

Archi

Budukh

Khinalug

Kryz

Some Avar, Lak and Dargwa materials were written in Arabic script from the 19th century, but generally the literary languages were given (Latin) scripts only in 1928, shifting to Cyrillic in 1938. The Tabasaran script, however, was created in 1932. Attempts to provide Rutul, Tsakhur and Agul with alphabets failed, though there seems to be a renewed attempt to write these languages today. The Udi, whom some scholars view as the remnants of the 'lost' Caucasian Albanians, were even offered an alphabet in the 1930s, although the language is spoken in only three villages (two in Azerbaijan, one in Georgia)! Before the Soviet period Arabic, Avar and Azeri were common *linguae francae*. The early Soviets tried to wean locals away from Arabic with its religious connotations by supporting the Turkic Kumyk in the north and Azeri in the south, but from the 1930s Russian has been the main inter-communal language outside the mountain-settlements, where there is strong adherence to the native tongue(s).

Islam came to Daghestan with the Arabs in the 8-9th centuries, and Daghestan, where the indigenous peoples listed above are Sunnis of the Shafe'i school, was a recognised centre of Arabic learning with some 2,000 Quranic schools up to the Revolution -- the Udis are, however, Orthodox (Armenian in Azerbaijan, Georgian in Georgia). Religious sentiment remains strong today, though the degrees of attachment differ, strongest amongst the Avars and Laks, weakest amongst the Lezgian sub-groups in the south. As in neighbouring Chechnya, there is a harmonious coalescence between Islam and the traditional organisation of a society based on clan and village.

The most celebrated period in the history of Daghestan (especially the Avars) was their great resistance to the Russians during the 19th century Caucasian War, particularly under the charismatic if unbending leadership of their third Imam, the Avar Shamil (b.1797 Gimri-aul, d.1871 Medina), one of the most successful guerilla-leaders in history. Dargho and Vedeno were his main bases in Chechnya, though forced eventually to Ghunib in Avaria, where finally compelled to surrender on 25 Aug 1859, after which the Tsar's forces were able to concentrate their full attention on the West Caucasian front. Had Shamil been able to unite Daghestanian and Circassian resistance in the 1840s, the outcome of the Caucasian War might well have been different -- the Western powers were too concerned with the Balkans in the 1850s to bother about events in the Caucasus (just like today!) --, but Christian Ossetia and something less than total commitment to the cause on the part of the Kabardinians in the central Caucasus meant that East and West Caucasia had to fight an uncoordinated and thus less effective campaign. Losing his eldest son, Jemal-Ed-Din, as hostage to

the Russians in 1839, Shamil secured his release only in 1855 after carrying off as counter-hostages two Georgian princesses with members of their household from the Ts'inandal estate of David Ch'avch'avadze in K'akheti. Their months of captivity in Shamil's mountain-serail have been described by the French governess, Ana Drancy, and one can do no better than read Lesley Blanch's *Sarvas of Paradise* for a compelling account of the entire war in Shamil's Daghestan, from which a deeper understanding of the outlook and moral code of the mountaineers will be gained. Reared in the Tsar's court and unfamiliar with the languages and life-style of Daghestan, Jemal-Ed-Din was dead within the year... Daghestan's anti-Bolshevik uprising in 1920-21 was cruelly crushed.

For all its diversity there has been little sign of trouble in post-Soviet Daghestan. Accommodation has been found for those Avar-speakers 'persuaded' to vacate Eastern Georgia by Georgian nationalists. There are reports of some dissatisfaction with the ever growing religio-linguistic pre-eminence of the Avars, but the main potential problem concerns the Lezgians. Their homeland extends from Southern Daghestan into Northern Azerbaijan (where perhaps as many as 130,000 plus 45,000 Avars reside), crossing what is no longer a relatively meaningless Soviet administrative division but an internationally recognised border between the Russian Federation and independent Azerbaijan. It remains to be seen what the outcome will be of the calls for a united Lezgistan by the movement *ᲗᲗᲗᲗ*'Unity', though a rival *ᲗᲗᲗᲗ*-party evidently advocates integration with Azerbaijan.

Ossetes

The Ossetes are descendants of the Alans, related to the Scythians and Sarmatians, who in antiquity extended over Russia's southern steppe. Ossetic belongs to the north-eastern branch of the Iranian languages; toponyms testify to its one-time greater range (e.g. *ᲗᲗ* is Ossetic for 'water, river'). Most specialists accept that the pan-North Caucasian sagas of heroes known as the Narts are of Ossetian origin. In 1989 the 597,802 Ossetes were mainly concentrated in both the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic (capital Vladikavkaz, Russian for 'ruler of the Caucasus'; formerly Orjonikidze), where 334,737 constituted 53% of the population, and Georgia. 164,009 then lived in Georgia, 65,195 in the South Ossetian Autonomous Republic (capital Tskhinval), which is divided from North Ossetia by the main Caucasus chain and where they formed 66.2% of the population in 1989.

The two dialects in the north are (eastern) Iron and (western) Digor; that in the south is somewhat distinct and has been heavily influenced by Georgian, which testifies to a long period of symbiosis. The precise date when Ossetes settled the southern flanks of the Caucasus became a point of heated controversy as nationalist fervour fouled Georgia's road to independence. The most absurd suggestion advanced by some Georgians was that the bulk of the Ossetes simply followed the Bolsheviks into South Ossetia in 1921; some (non-Ossete) Iranologists have suggested dates from the 6th century B.C. to the 1st century A.D.; even objective Georgian historians accept that significant numbers have been in the area since the 13th century -- Queen Tamar was herself half-Ossete. Abuse led to clashes, clashes to open war after Gamsakhurdia abolished South Ossetia's autonomous status following a declaration in Tskhinval of South Ossetia as an independent republic in December 1990. Thereafter it became the norm for Georgians publicly to refer to the region as *Shida Kartli* 'Inner Kartli', *Samachabulo* 'Fiefdom of the Machabelis', or at best *so-called South Ossetia*. The bloody war that ensued caused tens of thousands of refugees on both sides and so destroyed any trust South Ossetes may have had in Tbilisi that over a year after the ceasefire negotiated in the summer of 1992 and policed by tri-partite Russian-Ossetian-Georgian patrols there has been no political settlement and Ossetian leaders still call for a total break with Georgia and union with North Ossetia.

The first printed book in Ossetic appeared in 1798 utilising a Cyrillic alphabet. Publications in the 19th century used either Cyrillic or Georgian. Some Digor material in Arabic script also appeared. A Latin script was introduced in 1923. In 1938 Ossetic in North Ossetia adopted a Cyrillic script, whereas in South Ossetia a Georgian alphabet was re-introduced, the northern Cyrillic model finally being adopted after the death of Stalin. Digor was abolished as a literary language in 1939.

Being the one firm centre of Christianity in the North Caucasus (Eastern Orthodoxy came in the 6th century from Byzantium, but in the 17-18th centuries Islam was introduced to the Digors from Kabarda) no doubt conditioned closer relations with Russia than exists for any other North Caucasians with the shared northern neighbour. Herein surely lies the explanation for why the Ingush Prigorodnyj Raion was left in Ossetian control even after the Ingush returned from Central Asian exile. Ossetian (and Cossack) loyalties will be put to the test if and when the North Caucasus as a whole seeks to follow Chechenia's lead in attempting to break away from Russia's Federation).

Azerbaijanis

Of the 6,791,106 Azerbaijanis in the USSR in 1989 5,800,994 lived in the Republic of Azerbaijan (capital Baku), where they constituted 82.6% of the population. There are at least as many Azerbaijanis living over the border in the north-western region of Iran; this division of Azerbaijani territory between (Tsarist) Russia and Persia was formalised by the treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828). The now independent, former Soviet Azerbaijan has expressed no wish to unify Azerbaijani lands. Initially in favour of joining the Commonwealth of Independent States, membership was never ratified by the Baku parliament, though under the restored former Party Boss, Haidar Aliiev, Azerbaijan seems (September 1993) likely finally to join. Lying along the Caspian Sea Azerbaijan (along with Daghestan) has a keen interest in the future of the caviar-trade. Three quarters of Azerbaijanis are Shi'a Muslims, the remainder, predominantly in the north of the republic, are Sunni of the Hanafi school. Fertility-rates, though high, tended to be amongst the lowest among the USSR's Muslim republics. Azerbaijanis are also less russified than other (former Soviet) Turkic peoples. Little seems to remain of the old clan-system.

The Azeri language belongs to the south-western (Oghuz) branch of Turkic and is close to Turkish. It became a literary language in the 14th century and was written for centuries in the Arabic script. Widespread as a *lingua franca* in Daghestan even before Soviet times, Azeri was actively promoted in the early 1920s, but this policy went into reverse after 1928 when pan-Turkism became a new bogey for the Soviet leadership. Azeri is, however, still known in Daghestan, especially in the south. The script was latinised in 1929 and became Cyrillic-based in 1939. A Latin alphabet has now been reintroduced.

The ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijanis is thought to be a mixture of Caucasian Albanians with various Iranian and Turkic speaking tribes (Cimmerians, Scythians, Huns, Bulgars, Khazars, Oghuz, Pachaniks), the consolidation taking place in the 11-13th centuries with the admixture of the new wave of Seljuk Turks. The Red Army put an end to Azerbaijan's few post-Revolutionary years of independence on 28 April 1920. When the Soviet borders between the Transcaucasian republics were established, Azerbaijan was given two provinces which had Armenian majorities at the time: Nakhichevan (capital Nakhichevan), from which it is totally separated by Armenia, and Nagorno-Karabagh (in Armenian *Artsakh*, capital Stepanakert); the Zakatala region, where the Muslim Georgian Ingilos live, was also placed under Baku's control. In 1989 the

Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic had an Azerbaijani population of 281,807 against a mere 1,858 Armenians, whilst the Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous District had 145,450 Armenians against 40,632 Azerbaijanis. The Armenians of Karabagh took advantage of *perestroika* to express their dissatisfaction with Baku's restrictions on their culture and called for union with Armenia. This led to an all-out war, which is still ongoing. The subsequent massacres of Armenians in and around Baku led to virtually all Azerbaijan's Armenians (sc. outside Karabagh) fleeing to Armenia (in 1989 a total of 390,505 Armenians lived on Azerbaijani territory) and vice versa. For a time in 1989 Georgians were publishing criticisms of Baku's treatment of the Ingilos (e.g. restricting their language-rights, refusing expeditions from Georgia permission to visit archæological sites in the region) as well as charging Georgia's Muslims (in essence its Azerbaijani minority, which numbered 307,556, concentrated in the southern districts of Marneuli and Dmanisi) with reproducing at such a rate as to place in jeopardy Georgians' majority-status in Georgia. Not surprisingly, clashes occurred in early July 1989 in southern Georgia, which reportedly involved fatalities. These problems, though, were quickly overtaken by Georgian-Abkhazian fighting. The present state of relations between Georgians and Georgian Azerbaijanis is uncertain -- this is the area where the oil/gas-pipeline running through Georgia to Armenia is constantly being blown up, a fact which suggests that the Georgians are either unwilling or unable to police the area effectively. On the other hand, the logical alignment between the two oldest Christian states in the world, Armenia and Georgia, seems to be frustrated not just by long running rivalries over such trivial questions as to which of their scripts is the older but by *realpolitik*: (a) Azerbaijan has oil, Armenia has nothing; (b) support for Armenia over Karabagh would weaken Georgia's arguments for retaining control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A similar dilemma undoubtedly faces Russia over Abkhazia -- open support for the considerable Russian minority there, who sympathise with the Abkhazians (being equally alarmed at Georgian chauvinism), would render Russian retention of its own numerous colonies less secure, whereas to abandon Abkhazia completely would surely lead to rebellion across the whole North Caucasus, a danger that remains very real. What relations independent Azerbaijan will establish with its Georgian, Daghestanian and Russian minorities remains a question for the future.

Armenians

Armenian, though long regarded as a sub-type of Iranian because of the large number of Iranian loan-words it contains, was finally demonstrated to represent an independent branch of the Indo-European language-family in the late 19th

century. Christian (of the monophysite Orthodox variety) since 301, Armenians developed their unique, angular script later in the 4th century and have enjoyed a continuous literary tradition ever since. A small group of Armenians were Islamicised; they are called Hemshinli. Hemshinli in south-west Georgia and Armenia were exiled to Central Asia along with the Meskh(et)ians in 1944, as were a number of other small Muslim groups from these areas.

The present Republic of Armenia (capital Erevan) is only a tiny fraction the size of the land once inhabited by Armenians, historical Greater Armenia, which incorporated a large swathe of present-day eastern Turkey. Part of this territory was the home of the ancient kingdom of Urartu. Around 600B.C. Urartu was invaded by certain Iranian tribes and a people from Anatolia called Hayasa -- the Armenians call themselves *Hayk* and their land *Hayastan*. Within one hundred years Persians and Greeks were referring to a people they styled *Armina* and *Armenioi* respectively. Armenia had relations with Rome and Byzantium, but the people who were to play the most fatal role in the history of the Armenian nation were the Turks, who first arrived in the region in the first half of the 11th century. Their assaults on Armenian towns led eventually after the battle of Manzikert in 1071 to a mass-migration from part of the homeland to the province of Cilicia, which was to become the most important Armenian centre in mediæval times. Some Armenians went north to settle in the Crimea, southern Russia, Romania and even Poland. Armenia did not escape the effect of the Mongols, and from the 16th century Karabagh under the Meliks became a stronghold of Armenian culture until the capture of eastern Armenia by Tsarist Russia early in the 19th century. The creation of the nationalist *Dashnaktsutjun* (= Alliance) Party late in the century was unwelcome both in Russia and Turkey. In 1895 the Turkish ruler, Abdul Hamid, decided on action and a series of officially sanctioned massacres were committed, Turkish hatreds being fuelled by added resentment at the financial acumen of an at least in part long urbanised (and Christian!) Armenian community -- this is what caused Gladstone to talk of 'the unspeakable Turk'. Many deaths occurred in fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Then during the 1st World War the Young Turk nationalists saw their opportunity to finish the job Abdul Hamid had begun and embarked on what the Armenians refer to as 'The Genocide'. It is estimated that over one million Armenians perished; the Armenian population of Turkey was in essence liquidated and the diaspora-communities in Syria, France, England, America etc... created. Turkey has never officially acknowledged, let alone apologised for, these incidents. Many fled over the border into Russian Armenia, where further misery (e.g. lack

of food, clothing and housing) awaited. Independent for three years after the Russian October Revolution, Armenia had high hopes of recovering some of the lost Turkish vilayets, bolstered by what proved to be grandiose but vain promises from such Western leaders as Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson. In 1920 the British abandoned even the Baku oilfields, and Armenia was doomed to become prey to the Red Army, which was victorious in late 1920. Armenia was conquered a second time after a rebellion while the Red Army was otherwise occupied in gobbling up Georgia, the Soviet Armenian Republic being declared on 2 April 1921. With the loss of Nakhichevan and Karabagh, Soviet Armenia was even smaller than the already reduced independent Armenia had been. Armenia also lost the dispute with Georgia over the provinces of Lori and Borchalo in Georgia's south-west.

Armenians of the diaspora tend to have the reputation of making successful entrepreneurs -- names such as Gulbenkian come immediately to mind. They are a numerous and important lobby for Armenia, though not as united and thus not as powerful as the diaspora-Jews are for Israel. They do, however, provide a lot of humanitarian relief for their homeland, as was apparent to whole world after the 1988 earthquake. Wherever in the world they live, they tend to keep very much to themselves as communities, regularly intermarrying and thus preserving their language and culture.

Armenia is ethnically the most homogeneous republic in the Caucasus (and indeed among the former Soviet republics in general), even though it also has the highest proportion of its people (even excluding the Western diaspora) living outside the republic. In 1989 the Soviet Armenian population stood at 4,627,227. Of these 3,081,920 lived in Armenia itself, constituting 93.2% of the total population, a proportion which will now have increased, given the inflow from Azerbaijan and the outflow of the local Azerbaijanis. The lack of internal division has not, of course, meant that Armenia is flourishing after the collapse of the USSR. The earthquake of 1988 levelled whole towns (such as Leninakan), and the war with Azerbaijan, concerning which all Armenians are of one accord, has resulted in a total blockade of supplies from Azerbaijan. Turkey is the western neighbour. Georgia to the north should have been a secure source of supply, but the Georgian railway-network to Russia was frequently blocked from early 1992 by Gamsakhurdia-supporters in Mingrelia, the Mingrelian problem being subsequently compounded by the effect of the war in Abkhazia. This leaves only a road-link (the Georgian Military Highway) through Georgia to Russia, which is not open at the height of winter, plus Iran to the south. Given

this highly precarious situation, it is perhaps not surprising that everything possible is done to avoid open disputation with the Georgians, where in 1989 437,211 Armenians lived (11,000 fewer than in 1979), concentrated in the south-west of the republic, though of this total 76,541 lived in Abkhazia (3,000 more than in 1979!). The Armenians have had difficulties with Georgian chauvinism, regarding such questions as the ownership of churches in the south-west, the ethnicity of Gamsakhurdia's local prefects and the number of hours their children are allotted at school for learning Armenian. Little public fuss, however, is made of these difficulties. Significantly, though, inside Abkhazia the local Armenians largely support the Abkhazians -- when in 1989 the local Kartvelians refused to have anything more to do with the Abkhazian State University, where they and the Russians formed the two largest sectors, and set up the rival 'Branch of Tbilisi University', the Abkhazians immediately created an Armenian sector to replace the lost Georgian one! If Georgia fragments, as it is shewing every likelihood of doing following the Ossetian, Abkhazian and Mingrelian conflicts, it is highly probable that the Armenians in the south-west will strive to unite with Armenia, just as the neighbouring Azerbaijanis will strive to unite with Azerbaijan. If Georgia miraculously manages to survive its present crisis, Armenians will no doubt seek continuing friendly relations with their old northern rivals...

Tats

In 1989 the USSR had a Tat population of 30,817, largely split between Azerbaijan and Daghestan. Their language belongs to the Iranian family of Indo-European, and a Hebrew-influenced dialect of it is spoken by the Caucasus' Mountain Jews, of whom there were 19,516 in 1989. Only this latter variety has literary status, the Hebrew script having been utilised prior to the Revolution, Latin from 1929, and finally Cyrillic from 1939. Tats are mainly Shi'ite Muslims, though Monophysite Christians are also found amongst them. Tats also live in Iran. Culturally and in life-style they resemble the Azerbaijanis.

Talysh

Between the 1926 census and that of 1989 the Talysh were classified as 'Azerbaijanis'. In 1989 21,914 (almost all in Azerbaijan) declared themselves to be Talysh -- in 1926 there had been 77,000. This means either that there has been an intense process of assimilation at work or that for some reason members of the Talysh community may have been reticent about re-classifying themselves after 63 years of indoctrination to regard themselves as Azerbaijanis (cf. a parallel problem for the Mingrelians and Svans in Georgia); a recent article from

Azerbaijan suggests that the Talysh community may actually number between 200,000 and 250,000. The language is another member of the Iranian family and enjoyed a 9-year period as a literary language when it was given a Latinized alphabet in 1930. They are Shi'ite Muslims and live in the southernmost part of Azerbaijan (and in northern Iran).

Kurds

In 1989 152,952 Kurds lived in the USSR, two-thirds in the Transcaucasus: 56,028 in Armenia (part of whom are Yezidis, so-called 'Devil-Worshippers'), 33,327 in Georgia, 12,221 in Azerbaijan. They are Sunni Muslims and speak an Iranian language.

Assyrians

The Assyrians are descendants of the Aramæans and speak a Semitic language, which for a time at least during the Soviet period was actually taught in some Georgian schools. The total Soviet population in 1989 was 26,289, of whom 6,183 lived in Armenia and 5,286 in Georgia. They are Christians (Jacobites, Nestorians, Catholics or Orthodox).

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