

## The Russian Imperial Academy and Western Transcaucasia

(late 18th century to the 1850s)<sup>1</sup>

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### Historical Sketch

Known to western civilisations since the 8th century B.C. when the Ancient Greeks (specifically, the Ionians of Miletus) established colonies (e.g. ὁ Μέγας Πιττουῶς, today's Pitsunda, in northern Abkhazia) along the eastern shores of the Black Sea (Pontic Euxine), the Western (Trans-)Caucasus has always been distinguished for its multi-ethnicity. At the start of the Christian era, for instance, the geographer Strabo observed how Dioskuria (later called Seb/vastopolis, designations for what is today's capital of Abkhazia, namely Aq<sup>W</sup>'a, more commonly known as Sukhum) served as the commercial centre for the peoples living in the mountains above it and for the surrounding neighbourhood, whilst Pliny Secundus in the second half of the 1st century A.D. speaks of it as a depopulated Colchidian town previously famed for the fact that upto 300 representatives of peoples speaking different languages would gather there, for the purpose of carrying on trade with whom the Romans needed 130 interpreters (see Inal-Ipa 1965.109).

Colchis was, of course, the fabled land of the Golden Fleece in the popular myth of Jason. And in recent years this myth has become a common theme in a tiresome nationalist debate as to which Caucasian people might have been the 'original' denizens of this realm — one frequently has the impression that certain commentators are incapable of recognising the difference between legends and historical data. In reality, it is most likely that the area was always cosmopolitan in makeup and, as the Mingrelian scholar Simon Dzhanashia observed (1988.295), Colchis was for the ancients a rather loosely defined entity, employed as 'more a geographical than political term, and even then with uncertain boundaries,' though for Strabo it extended roughly from Pitsunda (northern Abkhazia) to Trebizond (Turkey). In later Roman times the state of Lazica was located here. Lazica entered a state of vassalage to Byzantium, and, with Byzantium's power on the wane in the late 8th century, Leon II, potentate of the Abkhazians, took his opportunity and 'seized [in Georgian *da-i-p'q'r-a*] Abkhazia and Egrisi [sc. the modern province of Mingrelia] as far as the Likhi [Mountains] and took the title "King of the Abkhazians"' (Georgian Chronicles known as *kartlis tskhovreba* I, p.251 of Simon Q'aughchishvili's 1955 edition). The

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<sup>1</sup>The information which I was asked to provide had largely been marshalled and published in 1965 by the distinguished Mingrelian linguist, Arnold Chikobava. Since his book is only available in Georgian, I have simply translated relevant parts in what follows. Had Prof. Chikobava not died in 1985, it would have been legitimate to ask his permission to style him joint-author of this article, but, as I cannot do that, I simply state how gratefully I acknowledge my immense debt to his 'History of the Study of the Ibero-Caucasian Languages' (Tbilisi, 1965, in Georgian). I am grateful to Dr. Slava Chirikba for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

resulting Kingdom of Abkhazia, comprising the whole of what now is generally regarded as western Georgia, lasted for roughly 200 years until the accession of Bagrat' III in 975 produced the first king of a united Georgia. Thus, it was natural that from c.780 to 975 toponyms synonymous with the land we know in English as 'Abkhazia' (e.g. Abkhaz *Apsny*, Georgian *apxaz-et-i*) applied to the whole of western Georgia. During the period when Georgia remained united (upto c.1245) the translation-equivalents of 'Abkhazia' were synonymous with the native Georgian *sakart-v-el-o* 'Georgia', after which time they resumed their original, restricted sense, referring to the territory we designate as 'Abkhazia'.

Central power in the united (Abkhaz-)Georgian kingdom collapsed with the appearance of the Mongols in the 13th century; they caused the country to split into two kingdoms (Imereti in western Georgia, and Kartli-K'akheti in the east), which in their turn fragmented into smaller political units, constituting sovereign princedoms. At the close of the 13th century there was no 'Georgia' in the sense one understands today, for the territory consisted of a conglomeration of the above-mentioned princedoms. In Abkhazia the dominant family was called Chachba, and they vied for power in south-eastern Abkhazia and north-western Mingrelia with the Mingrelian princely family called Dadiani. In the 14th century Giorgi Dadiani acquired the southern half of Abkhazia, restricting the Abkhazian rulers (known in Georgian as the Shervashidzes, or Sharvashidzes), to the north of their domains. Eventually at the close of the 14th century the whole of Abkhazia became vassal of the princedom of Sabediano (essentially Mingrelia), even if the Shervashidzes were not wholly subservient to Dadiani edicts<sup>2</sup>. Taking advantage of a weakening Mingrelia in the 1680s, the Chachbas extended their southern border to the R. Ingur [Egry] and strengthened their hold over the territory by increasing the Abkhazian population there (Anchabadze 1959.297). In 1705 three Chachba brothers divided up the territory, one taking the north (from Gagra to the K'odor [K<sup>W</sup>'ydry]), the second the central Abzhywa region (from the K'odor to the Ghalidzga [Aaldzga] — N.B. in Abkhaz *a-bzhy-wa* means 'the-central-people'), and the third, Murzaq'an, the southern part (from the Ghalidzga to the Ingur), and so this last province, which is slightly larger than the modern Gal District, became known as Samurzaq'ano (Georgian Encyclopædia vol.9 p.37).

From the 14th to the 16th centuries Genoese influence in these parts was strong with the establishment along the coast of trading centres (e.g. Kakari, an obvious attempt to render the toponym of Gagra<sup>3</sup> in N. Abkhazia).

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<sup>2</sup>The chronicler is Egnat'ashvili. All references to Abkhazians and Abkhazia in mediæval Georgian sources have been gathered and put into Russian by G. Amichba either without Georgian original (1986) or including it (1988). See the latter (pp.112-113) for this quote.

<sup>3</sup>Kvarchija's etymology (2002.94) is: /a.ga a.k'.ro/ the.coast its.hold.ing > /gaka'ra/ > /gak'ra/ > /gagra/.

From the early 16th century Abkhazia begins to be mentioned as an independent entity, and at the same time the Ottoman Turks were gaining dominance along the Black Sea's eastern littoral, introducing (at least a veneer of) Islam to the pre-existing Christianity, though of the Abkhazians at least it has been said: 'We Abkhazians are equally cool to both Islam and Christianity' (Dmitry Gulia, father of Abkhazian literature, in his autobiography).

As Ottoman power rose, (south-)western regions of Georgia found themselves the object of Turkish expansion, just as central/eastern provinces were prey to Safavid Persian aggression. Georgia in around 337 A.D. had been the second state (after its neighbour Armenia a generation earlier) officially to adopt Christianity. And it was to the main nearby Christian power of Muscovy, encroaching from the north, that King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti looked for protection. On 24 July (4 August new style) 1783 the Treaty of Georgievsk was signed with Catherine the Great's Russia. The 200th anniversary was officially celebrated in Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, with much pomp and ceremony, though most Georgians secretly regard(ed) it as a mark of national disgrace, a reminder of both their historical weakness and complicity in sanctioning Russia's emergence as a power in the Transcaucasus. When Agha Mohamed Khan ransacked Tbilisi (Tiflis) in 1795, the Russians failed to honour their Georgievsk undertakings and left the Georgian capital to its fate, thereby facilitating the incorporation of the fragmented provinces of Georgia within the Holy Russian Empire, starting in 1801 with Kartli-Kakheti; Mingrelia followed in 1803 and Imereti in 1804; Abkhazia came under Russian protection in 1810 but administered its own affairs until 1864.

#### The Peoples of Western Transcaucasia

The Georgians are the most numerous of the indigenous Caucasian peoples (at least if one considers Caucasians still living on their native soil). The Georgian language belongs to the South Caucasian (or Kartvelian) language-family, whose other members are: Mingrelian, Laz, and Svan. Mingrelian is spoken in the lowlands of western Georgia and in the (south-)easternmost region of Abkhazia. Laz is spoken by negligible numbers in pockets along the Black Sea coast of Abkhazia and Georgia, but the main population has been on the Turkish side of the border since the establishment of the Turko-Russian (later Turko-Soviet, now Turko-Georgian) frontier — the historical Georgian provinces of Tao, Klarjzheti and Shavsheti also lie within Turkey. Laz and Mingrelian are viewed inside Georgia as dialects of the so-called Zan language, which would once have been heard in a dialect-continuum along the eastern coast of the Black Sea (from Abkhazia round to Rize, or, in other words, the more southerly parts of Colchis) until Georgian-speakers, fleeing the appearance of the Arabs in central Georgia (where a caliphate was established in Tbilisi between 655 and 1122), split them into the separate Mingrelian and Laz communities. Svan is

spoken in the mountain-valleys of the Upper Ingur and Tskhenis-Ts'q'ali rivers. Since circa 1930 speakers of all these languages have within the Soviet Union, and now Georgia, been designated as 'Georgians' (in Georgian *kartv-el-eb-i*), a deliberate obfuscation of the meaning of the ethnonym *kartv-el-i* 'Georgian', which accounts for why the term is placed in quotation-marks in the table below with data from the last two Soviet censuses for the main populations of the [Soviet] Republic of Georgia:

<b><u>Main Population of Georgia (1979 &amp; 1989)</u></b>				
	<u>1979</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1989</u>
Whole Population	4,993,182	5,400,841	100%	100%
'Georgians'	3,433,011	3,787,393	68.8%	70.1%
Armenians	448,000	437,211	9.0%	8.1%
Russians	371,608	341,172	7.4%	6.3%
Azerbaijanis	255,678	307,556	5.1%	5.7%
Ossetians	160,497	164,055	3.2%	3.0%
Greeks	95,105	100,324	1.9%	1.8%
Abkhazians	85,285	95,853	1.7%	1.8%
Kurds	26,000	33,327		
Jews	20,107	10,302		
Georgian Jews	7,974	14,314		

There may be around 50,000 Svans and between half and one million Mingrelians, but not all ethnic Mingrelians speak the language; there are very few Laz in Abkhazia or Georgia.

The homeland of the Abkhazians is the triangle of territory in north-west Transcaucasia that nestles between the main chain of the Greater Caucasus, the Black Sea and the R. Ingur. A portion of the population moved out of Abkhazia across the Klukhor Pass to settle in the Teberda Valley in the North Caucasus, where they form the small Abaza population. The first wave of migration out of Abkhazia took place in the 14th century (as acknowledged in the Georgian Encyclopædia, vol. I, in 1975) to form eventually the speakers of the T'ap'anta sub-dialect of Abaza, whilst the ancestors of the second sub-dialect, Ashkharywa, a bridge between Abaza and more standard forms of Abkhaz, followed in a second wave some time after the 17th century. Abkhazians and Abazinians living in Turkey are jointly styled 'Abaza' by non-N.W. Caucasians. The Abkhaz(-Abaza) language belongs to the North West Caucasian family (totally unrelated to South Caucasian), whose other members are Circassian and the extinct Ubykh. Historically, the Ubykhs lived around what is now the popular Russian resort of Sochi, to the north of the Abkhazians (specifically the tribe of Sadz Abkhazians). Whilst to their north and inland along the foothills of the N.W. Caucasus the various Circassian tribes were distributed. When Russia gained final victory in the Great Caucasian War (at Krasnaja Poljana above Sochi in May

1864), most Circassians, most Abkhazians and all the Ubykhs preferred to abandon their homeland to live with co-religionists in Ottoman lands rather than submit to (Christian) Russian rule and resettlement in the lowlands of the Kuban basin. This means that today one finds their descendants largely concentrated in Turkey but also spread across the various states that emerged from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. If one takes these communities into account, Circassians would represent the most populous among the autochthonous Caucasian peoples. Only rump-populations of Circassians and Abkhazians remain on Caucasian soil.

A North Central Caucasian language is spoken in eastern Georgia. Related to Chechen and Ingush, this is Bats (or Ts'ova Tush). The Bats seem originally to have inhabited some hamlets in the north of the Georgian mountain-province of Tusheti but began migrating to lowland-areas in the early 19th century and are now compactly settled in Zemo Alvani, a village in K'akheti, where the language, long heavily influenced by Georgian, is no longer (from around the 1980s) being enthusiastically transmitted to the younger generations amongst the 5,000 or so community and thus appears fated to disappear in the not-too-distant future. The Bats are also officially classified as 'Georgians' today. In recent times the presence of the 10,000 or so Chechen speakers (locally known as Kist's) in east Georgia's P'ank'isi Gorge have achieved a certain notoriety as a result of the Chechen wars.

Speakers of some North East Caucasian (or Daghestanian) languages, such as Avar and Bezhta, have in the course of time spilled over from Daghestan to settle in eastern Georgia — for Udi, see below.

Apart from the sizeable proportions amongst Georgia's population constituted by peoples with eponymous republics of their own in Transcaucasia (sc. the Armenians and Azerbaijanis — needless to say, at the time when the Armenian-populated province of Dzhavakheti was gained by Georgia during the First World War it was the object of dispute between Georgia and Armenia), there is also a significant number of (South) Ossetians, most of whom live in what became designated by the Soviets as the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia (capital Tskhinval) in the north of western Georgia. The main Ossetian population is concentrated in Russia's republic of North Ossetia. Ossetic is an Iranian (and thus Indo-European) language, and the Ossetes are generally deemed to be the descendants of the ancient Alans (with links to the Scythians and Sarmatians).

Also to be found in Georgia are Kurds, settlements of Pontic Greeks, a small number of Assyrians, remnants of a once larger Jewish community — most Jews migrated to Israel in the later Soviet period.

### Travellers

Visitors to, and writers on, the region of interest featured in this article have referred at various times since 500 B.C. to local peoples. For example, in the general

area of Abkhazia a fragment of Hekataios (c.500 B.C.) mentions the *He:níok<sup>h</sup>oi* 'Charioteers'<sup>4</sup>. Skylax of Karyanda (c.500 B.C.) also mentions *Ak<sup>h</sup>aioí* 'Achaeans', placed by Melikishvili (1970.400) around Sochi, to their north, and yet further north the *Kerkétai* '(?)Circassians/Cherkess'. Strabo places the *Zugoí* between the 'Charioteers' and the Achaeans, and these have been identified with the Circassians too<sup>5</sup>. The Apsilians (*gens Absilae*) are first mentioned by Pliny Secundus, whilst Arrian in the 2nd century introduces the term *Abasgoí* 'Abazgians', whom he locates to the north of the Apsilians (*Apsílai*), whilst to their north he places the *Sanígai* 'in whose territory lies Sebastopolis' (K'ech'aghmadze 1961.43), which is conventionally identified as Sukhum<sup>6</sup>. Thus the Apsilians are to be located around Ochamchira (Greek *Gue:nós*). In the 6th century Agathias introduces the *Misimianoí*, who are separated from the Apsilians by the fort at *Tibélos* (modern Ts'abal/Ts'ebelda). Of course, it is often next to impossible to identify some of these ethnonyms with designations of the historical denizens. At first sight, for instance, it seems straightforward to link the *Kerkétai* with the Circassians, though Kuipers (1960.7) queries the association. For a discussion of Apsilians, Abazgians and Missimians see Hewitt (1993).

The ancients, especially the Greeks, were never really interested in languages other than their own, referring generically to non-Greek speakers as *bárbaros*, the source of our 'barbarian', but during the sway of the Genoese a certain Archbishop Johannes de Galonifontibus passed through the Caucasus in 1404 and wrote with concision and a good deal of (if not total) accuracy: 'The country called Zikia or Circassia lies at the foot of the mountains on the Black Sea... They have their own language and writing [sic! — BGH]... Beyond these [Circassians] is Abkhazia, a small hilly country...They have their own language...To the east of them, in the direction of Georgia, lies the country called Mingrelia...They have their own language...Georgia is to the east of this country. Georgia is not an integral whole...They have their own language' (Tardy 1978.92-95). Also for the 15th century the Genoese Giorgio Interiano has left a description of the Circassian coast (for a

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<sup>4</sup>The etymology of this word is clearly Greek, viz. *he:nía* 'reins' + *ók<sup>h</sup>os* 'bearer' from *ék<sup>h</sup>o*: 'I have/hold'.

<sup>5</sup>cf. Georgian *dzhik-i*, Abkhaz *a-zax<sup>w</sup>a*.

<sup>6</sup>In Abkhaz *Aq<sup>w</sup>'a* — see Hewitt (1992). Moving along the coast from Trebizond Arrian mentions the following tribes: Trapezuntines, Colchians, Drils, *Sánnoi/Tzánnoi* '?=Zans' (N.B. the Laz self-designation is *ch'an-i*, the Svan term for a Mingrelian is *mu-zân*, and the parent-language of Mingrelian and Laz is known as Zan), Macrones (N.B. the Mingrelian self-designation is *ma-rg-al-i*), 'Charioteers' [sic], Zydreitai, Laz, and then the Apsilians. Procopius of Caesarea (fl.c.550) mentions a tribe *Broúk<sup>h</sup>oi* to the north of the Abazgians, who have been identified with the Ubykhs (cf. Dumézil 1965.15), whose self-designation is *t<sup>w</sup>axi* (though this has been challenged by Christol 1987.219). All references in the classical authors to tribes in the region have been gathered and translated into Russian by Gulia (1986.215-255).

French translation of his work see vol. I of Ferdinand Dubois de Montpéroux 1839-1843<sup>7</sup>).

Catholic (Theatine) missionaries were active, especially in Mingrelia, during the 17th century, and some have left important observations on the peoples and their customs; such a one was Don Archangelo Lamberti, who lived there from 1633 to 1653.

Indeed, it was 17th-century visitors who brought from the Caucasian isthmus the first lists of words and phrases to be documented for the local (mostly unwritten) tongues. In this regard the half-Turkish, half-Abkhazian traveller Evliya Çelebi deserves special mention. His 'Travel Book' (*Seyahetname*) from the 1640s includes, in addition to Georgian, valuable material for Abkhaz, Ubykh, Circassian and Mingrelian (see Bleichsteiner 1934; Provasi 1978, 1984; Gippert 1992). Circassian and Georgian were included in the materials from 26 languages/dialects presented by Amsterdam dignitary and member of the board of the Dutch East India Company, Nicolaes Cornelisz Witsen (1641-1717), in his *Noord en Oost Tartarye(n)* (1692; enlarged edition 1705)<sup>8</sup>. However, it was not really until well into the 19th century as part of the move (in the wake of Sir William Jones' late 18th-century observations regarding Sanskrit's genetic link to Greek and Latin) to discover the full extent of the Indo-European family of languages (and in consequence to classify the world's languages) that philologists began to examine in depth the varieties of speech attested in the Caucasus. And it was partly in this context that the investigations by representatives of the Russian Academy began to make valuable contributions from the 1770s. It is the linguistic aspect of the reports of such investigators that will be highlighted in what follows.

#### The Russian Academy and the Caucasus in the 18th Century

Russian interests in moving south and Georgia's political weakness and fragmentation led to contacts between the two as early as the late 16th century — the embassies despatched by the tsars between 1589 and 1605 have been chronicled by W.E.D. Allen (1970). By the end of the 18th century, Russia was a significant player in the area, threatening the (largely Muslim) North Caucasian peoples and consolidating relations in the Transcaucasian states by construction of the Georgian Military Highway: regular traffic between Vladikavkaz in N. Ossetia and Tbilisi started around 1799. But the extent of ignorance about the Caucasus in the Russian

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<sup>7</sup>The six volumes of text and the wonderful series of illustrations produced by this Swiss polymath and professor at Neuchâtel on the basis of his travels along the Black Sea coast from The Crimea round to Circassia, Abkhazia, Georgia and inland to Armenia from 1831 to 1834 contain a wealth of information; Dubois was the first person to study the geology of Georgia. Though the publication of his work was supported by Tsar Nicholas I and appeared in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dubois was not representing the Russian Academy.

<sup>8</sup>A study of the Dutch-Georgian word-list was being prepared by Wim Lucassen at the time this work was being written, though he died after the paper was completed.

capital before attempts were made to gather necessary information is well illustrated in Isabel de Madariaga's book on Russia in the time of Catherine the Great: 'Russian relations with the Caucasian kingdoms were complex and tenuous, and left a great deal to the discretion (or indiscretion) of local commanders. (So little was known about the area that when an emissary of King Solomon of Imeretia asked to be received in St Petersburg in 1768, Catherine called for maps, and found that according to some of them Tiflis was on the Black Sea, according to others, on the Caspian)' (de Madariaga 2001.369). The first academic mission to the Caucasus was headed by Johann Anton Gldenstdt (1745-1781), with whom any study of the Academy's activities in the Caucasus must begin, even though the dates of his travel and publication of his materials fall outside the strict remit of this conference.

### 1. Johann Anton Gldenstdt

Gldenstdt was born to a German family on 26 April 1745 in Riga. He studied medicine, botany and natural sciences in Berlin from 1763 and gained a doctorate from Frankfurt-am-Oder in 1767. As a 23 year-old naturalist and medical doctor, he was invited the following year by the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg, of which he became a full member and professor of natural science on 8th April 1771, to participate in the planned 7-man expedition to the Caucasus — Catherine the Great decreed that a number of such expeditions should be organised both to collect data on her empire and to make observations of the passage of Venus. The Caucasus group were travelling for some years (1768-1775), of which around 12 months from September 1771 were spent in Western Transcaucasia. Often afflicted with fever on his travels, Gldenstdt died in St. Petersburg on 21st March 1781, aged just 36.

The two volumes resulting from the expedition were posthumously published in Gldenstdt's name by Peter Simon Pallas and entitled 'Dr. Johann Anton Gldenstdt: Reisen durch Russland und im kaukasischen Gebrge' (St. Petersburg, Band I, 1787, XXIV+511 pp., Band II, 1791, 552 pp.); the German text with Georgian translation was published in two volumes by Gela Gelashvili (Tbilisi, 1962 & 1964).

At the end of September 1771 Gldenstdt finally crossed into Dusheti, making the southern Ossetes the first people of Transcaucasia that he encountered. On 15 October he was received by King Erekle II, whom he accompanied into eastern Georgian regions on 21st February 1772. While here, he was able to gather information about some of the peoples of Daghestan, such as the K'ap'uch'i, Dido and Avar. Gldenstdt spent April and May exploring northern and southern regions of central Georgia. From late June he moved through S. Ossetia into the north-western province of Rach'a and from there southwards into Imeretia. While in Khoni (16-17 August), he gathered information about Mingrelia and Lechkhumi from visiting Mingrelians but could not journey to Mingrelia itself, as it was too dangerous.



At a meeting with Imeretia's King Solomon on 28th August, Güldenstädt was shown lead and copper samples brought from the mountainous district of Svanetia and the source of the R. Tskhenis-ts'q'ali, an occasion which Güldenstädt used to learn something of Svanetia itself. Delayed on his return to the N. Caucasus by rebellious Ossetes, he finally got back to Kizlyar (virtually Russia's capital in the Caucasus until 1863 — A.P. Berzhe, quoted by Gammer 2006.10) under Russian escort on 2nd November.

Güldenstädt's posthumous volumes are in the form of a diary, describing when he was where and what he saw there: place, soil, water, flora, fauna, insects..., population, what the locals did, etc...; interwoven within the basic descriptions are a variety of excursions (e.g. under 'River Terek' are described its tributaries, the fish in it, the flora along its banks, and the settlements beside it; animal- and plant-life of the Caucasus; the political geography of the Caucasian mountain-zone and information on the peoples). Güldenstädt did not ignore the languages he heard, discussing their relationships and possible origins. He had a list of words which he had translated (albeit with gaps) into the various languages in order to facilitate comparison — 290 lexical items were the most illustrated, and this number was attained for the Kartvelian family.

Pages 496 to 535 of volume II are devoted to the indigenous Caucasian materials, whilst Iranian Ossetic is included on pages 535-545. Güldenstädt classifies the indigenous languages into:

1. Kartvelian Dialects (*Georgianische Mundarten*): Georgian, Mingrelian and Svan (496-504 pp.);
2. Nakh Dialects (*Mizdschegische Mundarten*): Chechen, Ingush, Tush (Bats) (504-511 pp.);
3. "Lezgian" and Related Dialects (*Lesginische und damit verwandte Mundarten*): Ants'ukh, Ch'ar, Khundzakh, Dido (512-519 pp.), plus Lak, Andi and Akusha (*Sprachen der Kasikumüken, Andi und Akuscha*, 520-527 pp.);
- 4: Kabardian and Abkhaz (*Kabardinische und Abassische Sprache*): Kabardian and coastal vs north Caucasian Abkhaz (*Kusch-hasib-Abassische vs Altekesek-Abassische*, viz. Abkhaz proper vs Abaza) (527-535 pp.).

Comments on these divisions would include the observation that Laz is lacking from the *Georgianische Mundarten*. The Nakh group is accurately characterised. 'Lesgian' is a strictly incorrect designation (albeit one common at the time to refer to Daghestanian peoples and languages in general), as it is here applied to three Avar dialects (Ants'ukh, Ch'ar, Khundzakh) plus Dido from the related Didoic/Tsezic sub-family. Lak has its older designation of Kazi-kumukh; Andi is more closely related to Avar; and Akusha is a dialect of Dargwa (Dargi(n)). Amongst the myriad of Daghestanian languages, all of the Lezgian, most of the Andic, and most of the

Didoic/Tsezic sub-families are missing. From North West Caucasian no mention is made of Ubykh. The vocabulary-materials are laid out according to semantic fields, the majority being nouns, with fewer adjectives, and very few verbs. Translations were obtained via translators, Güldenstädt not knowing any of the local languages or even Russian; hence, there are inconsistencies of treatment. A further source of difficulty arises out of the Roman or Gothic scripts used to present languages noted for phonetic challenges which the developing discipline of (comparative) philology and its subsidiary science of phonetics had yet to tackle. Compare, for example, the following:

<u>Language</u>	<u>Güldenstädt</u>	<u>Modern Transcription</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Georgian	<i>madsoni</i>	<i>mats'oni</i>	yoghurt
Georgian	<i>kadzi</i>	<i>k'atsi</i>	man
Georgian	<i>zikwaruli</i>	<i>siq'varuli</i>	love
Mingrelian	<i>kodschi</i>	<i>k'otfi</i>	man
Abkhaz	<i>isduda</i>	ᲒᲗᲗᲗ ᲒᲗᲗᲗ	whose is it?
Chechen	<i>berik</i>	ᲑᲗᲗᲗ	eye

For many of the languages incorporated in his work Güldenstädt's list represented the first time they were documented even to the extent of word-lists of this size. On the basis of his lexical comparisons, Güldenstädt was the first to make some progress in classifying the local languages and produced the oft-repeated and highly pertinent observation that 'Mingrelian stands in the same relationship to Georgian as does Dutch to German'. He did not recognise the genetic link, now universally accepted, between Nakh and Daghestanian, Daghestan being an area Güldenstädt did not himself visit. All eight linguistic forms named under his 3rd group he recognised as sister-languages (*Töchter einer Mutter*, I.484), and he (quite correctly) did not include Iranian Ossetic or Turkic Kumukh and Nogay in his Caucasian groupings.

In addition to his word-lists, Güldenstädt also had translated into 18 (half of them Caucasian) languages a series of cardinals plus 22 simple sentences, the first examples of connected speech recorded for Chechen, Avar, Andi and Dargwa/Dargi(n)<sup>9</sup>. The originals of these texts are partly kept in the Güldenstädt Collection at the Russian Academy of Sciences, whilst a part are in the Adelung Fund at St. Petersburg's public library<sup>10</sup>; they were published, with minor alterations, by Julius von Klapproth in 1814. An example each for Georgian and Mingrelian would be what in general is translatable as 'God is immortal; man's life is short':

<i>Hmertı arss uqudavi, qazi arss mzirıssa zchovrebıssa mkone</i>	[Georgian]
<i>Horomthı vauhur, qotschi syma chanzerhe</i>	[Mingrelian]

<sup>9</sup>Çelebi in the 1640s had gathered some such examples for Abkhaz and Circassian (see Gippert 1992).

<sup>10</sup>See Chikobava (1982), which incorporates photographs of the originals.

which are respectively to be transcribed and analysed as:

ymert.i	α(.)r.s <sup>11</sup>	u.kʰvd.αv.i			
God.NOM[inative]	be.X(-PRES[ent])	PRIV[ative].die.SUFF[ix].AGR[ement]			
kʰots.i	α(.)r.s	mtsir.isa	tsxovr(.)sb.isa	m.kon.s	
man.NOM	be.X(-PRES[ent])	slight.AGR	life.GEN[itive]	PRE[ix].have.SUFF	
'God is immortal; man is possessor of a short life'					[Georgian]
vorant.i	wa.yur(.u[n])	kʰotf.i	zəm(.)α	χan.(t)s	r.s[n]
God.NOM	not.die.PRES.X	man.NOM	measured	time.DAT[ive]	be.PRES.X
'God does not die, man exists for a limited time'					[Mingrelian]

Güldenstädt familiarised himself with historical documents, as when he was discussing the relationship between Abkhazia and Georgia, a matter of considerable relevance today: 'In olden times the country [Abkhazia] had its own ruler, who in the Georgian chronicles is referred to as the King of the Abkhazians (King of Abkhazia). Later it belonged over a long period to the king of Georgia, who then was referred to as the King of Abkhazia and Kartli [Georgia]. At the time of this leadership Greek Orthodoxy became widespread, and a Patriarch even sat in Bich'vinta [Pitsunda], whilst in Mokvi [Myk<sup>w</sup>] and Dranda archbishops [were installed]. Later they became independent of Georgia, and there is no unitary leadership' (vol. II). On the other hand, Güldenstädt's contemporary comments on language-usage can throw light on modern-day arguments about the extent of the knowledge of Georgian in what are today provinces of Georgia. Having stated, for example, that 'the Georgian province of Mingrelia and the districts of Odishi and Lechkhumi form the fourth kingdom of Georgia and have their own independent leader who carries the title Dadiani', Güldenstädt offers the remark: 'In Odishi they speak Mingrelian, whilst in Lechkhumi in a mixed Mingrelian-Imeretian dialect' (vol. I), defining Odishi as lying to the north and west of Mingrelia, extending to the Black Sea, and bordering Abkhazia to the north. Sadly, those who are only interested in arguing for a centuries-old spoken tradition for Georgian in both Mingrelia and Abkhazia tend to ignore Güldenstädt's text, which well repays study.

## 2. Jacob Reineggs

Although not strictly an envoy to the Caucasus on behalf of the Russian Academy, in order to understand the sequence of scholarly foreign visitors to, and observers of, western Transcaucasia on behalf of Russia mention should be made of Jacob Reineggs (see the relevant entry in vol. 8 of the 11-volume Georgian Encyclopædia and the Introduction to his 2002 Georgian translation of Reineggs' travel-book by Gia Gelashvili). Born in 1744 in Eisleben (Germany), the originally named Christian-Rudolf Elich studied at Leipzig University, for a time lived in

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<sup>11</sup>Older form of α(.)r.i.s.

Vienna, and gained his doctorate in medicine at Tirnau (Hungary) in 1773. Three years later he set out for the orient and made his way via Constantinople to Georgia circa 1779. In Tbilisi he entered the service of King Erekle II of Kartli(-Kakheti), where he not only practised medicine but introduced western systems for minting money and preparing gunpowder, becoming interested in mining practices and overseeing typographical and printing work.

Reineggs came to the attention of the Russian authorities and was appointed personal commissioner at the Court of Kartli-Kakheti by Grigoriy Potemkin, who thereby enlisted the western scientist in Russia's plan to bring both King Erekle II and his counterpart in western Georgia, King Solomon I of Imereti, into a pro-Russian orientation. As a result of his far from unsuccessful mission, which culminated in the aforementioned Treaty of Georgievsk with Catherine the Great's Russia in 1783 — indeed, at the signing he was at the side of Pavel Sergeievich Potemkin, first Viceroy in the Caucasus and cousin of the more famous carrier of this surname —, Reineggs was invited to Russia. From 1786 he was scientific secretary at the Medical College and at the start of 1787 was appointed Inspector of the Medical School at Ekaterine's Hospital and Director of the School of Medicine and Surgery in Petersburg. He died there in 1793, having become addicted to opium. Even after leaving the Caucasus he kept up contacts with leading figures in both Georgia and Armenia.

During his time in Georgia and the Caucasus in general he became well acquainted with the whole area. His writings were published under the title *Allgemeine historisch-topographische Beschreibung des Kaukasus*, volume I appearing in 1796 (Gotha und St.-Petersburg) and volume II in 1797 (Hildesheim und St.-Petersburg) and contain a geographical description of the region, extensive excursions, as well as interesting observations on ethnography, history, economics, extractive industry and linguistics. He was, however, not grounded in philology, as can be easily seen in the following. Though he correctly describes the border between Abkhazia and the Georgian province of Mingrelia thus: 'The river Engur [Ingur] splits the Abkhazians and Laz from the best-sited, fertile, sometimes low-lying, sometimes hilly and mountainous province known as Megrel or Samegrelo [Mingrelia]', he goes on to betray the naivety of his approach to language-study by remarking: 'Mingrelian is the name of the people residing here who have their own language; it represents a mixture of dialects of Caucasian, Greek and Georgian words.'

Given the recent charges made against the presence of Ossetes on the southern flanks of the Caucasus by Georgian nationalists in their struggle over rights to South Ossetia (still a province of Georgia in international law), Reineggs' conclusions will be of some interest: '...and, in truth, they [the southern Ossetes] live even now in that

area which first Pliny and then Moses Xorenatsi<sup>12</sup> named as the fiefdom of the Ass and Ghossi.'

### The Russian Academy and the Caucasus 1800-1850

The first researcher despatched to the Caucasus by the Russian Academy in the years that fall within the purview of this conference was yet another ethnic German.

#### 3. Julius von Klaproth

Klaproth was born in Berlin in 1783. Having published the *Asiatischer Magazin* in Weimar in 1802, he was invited to the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. After accompanying a diplomatic mission to China in 1805-06 and returning with a collection of manuscripts (Chinese and Mongol *inter alia*), he was sent by the Academy to the Caucasus (1807-08), spending 16 months travelling. He began work in Paris in 1825 and died there in 1835.

His description of his Caucasian travels was published in (Halle and) Berlin in two volumes in 1812 (740 pp.) and 1814 (624 pp.) under the title *Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien, unternommen in den Jahren 1807 und 1808, auf Veranstaltung der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu St.-Petersburg, enthaltend eine vollständige Beschreibung der kaukasischen Länder und ihrer Bewohner, von Julius von Klaproth, Kaiserl. Russischem Hofrathe und Mitgliede der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu St.-Petersburg*. An English version (*Travels in the Caucasus and Georgia*) came out in 1814, whilst a French translation (*Voyage au Caucase et en Géorgie*) appeared in 1823 in Paris.

In 1827 Klaproth published a Georgian-French and French-Georgian dictionary of some 4,000 items, which, according to Marie Brosset, seem to have been taken from the 17th-century word-list of the missionaries Stefano Paolini and Niceforo Irbach and from the lexicon appended to his self-tutor of Georgian by the Russian Piralof<sup>13</sup>. He also undertook to write a Georgian grammar, based on the work of an Italian missionary that he had acquired, but died before he could complete it, and the task of doing so was entrusted by the Asiatic Society to Brosset, whose *Elements de la langue Géorgienne* came out in 1837 (reprinted in 1974 by Biblio Verlag, Osnabrück).

Klaproth did not cross into Transcaucasia until December 1807, reaching Tbilisi on 14 January 1808. He travelled in central/eastern parts until the summer, claiming to have crossed back briefly over the snowy main chain from Mozdok to Oni, capital of Rach'a, before hostility to Russia forced him to leave Transcaucasia for the last time.

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<sup>12</sup>An Armenian historian of the latter half of the first millennium.

<sup>13</sup>I have no knowledge of this work other than the reference to it in Brosset.

Klaproth asserts that he was instructed to use and correct the materials left by his predecessors and boasts in a supplementary volume entitled *Kaukasische Sprachen. Anhang zur Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien* (288 pp., Halle und Berlin, published in 1814 but apparently composed in 1809) to his original publication of his superiority over Güldenstädt in relation to his ability to compare Caucasian and other oriental languages.

Section One is devoted to the Daghestanian languages (*Lesgische Sprachen*): Avar (pp. 10-55), Kazi-Kumukh or Lak (p. 56), Akusha or Dargwa/Dargi(n) (p. 58, with Lak-Dargwa comparisons on pp. 59-72), with mention of a 4th group named *Kuraelisch* = Lezgian on p. 72; pages 74 to 157 present comparative word-lists for Avar (with dialectal variants), Andi, Dido, Lak, Akusha, and Kubachi. Differently from Güldenstädt, Klaproth's materials are set out according to the alphabetical order of the German translation-equivalents (as opposed to Güldenstädt's ordering by semantic fields); Klaproth has up to 430 items, compared with Güldenstädt's 275 for Avar-Dido. Pages 134-137 incorporate parallel lists for the numerals, whilst the days of the week are set out on p. 138 for Avar, Andi, Dido, Lak, Dargwa and, strangely, Chechen.

Section Two (pp. 138-175) contains materials in the three Nakh languages, though the alphabetical principle for German equivalents is not applied here. Two dialects for Chechen are represented: Karabulax and an unspecified other; for Ingush the dialect is that of Shalxa.

Section Three (pp. 176-224) illustrates Ossetic (the texts being The Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments, and the Catechism) and includes an attempt to describe the declensional and conjugational systems of the language.

Section Four (pp. 225-245) presents 75 words, three phrases ('What is X called?', 'What is this?', and 'Please'), the days of the week and some basic grammatical observations (mainly on the Kabardian dialect of Circassian).

Section Five (pp. 246-261) looks at the *Abassische Sprache*, though the words and phrases represent the divergent Abaza dialect, and, on p. 261, the same phrases 'translated by an Abaza into some other language'.

Section Six (pp. 262-270) offers some remarks on, and a few words in, Svan.

Section Seven (pp. 271-288) has examples from four local Turkic tongues.

Klaproth was acquainted with historical sources on the Caucasus (e.g. classical writers such as Strabo, Arab geographers such as Mas'udi, and the Georgian chronicles) and attempts to identify some of the historical ethnonyms with contemporary tribes.

Of his four Daghestanian language-groups Klaproth admits to having no knowledge of the Lezgian family, stating simply and accurately that their speakers reside in southern Daghestan. Whilst managing to associate around Avar

Güldenstädt's Avar, Dido, K'ap'uch'i, and Andi, Klaproth introduces an error not made by his predecessor in wrongly ascribing to Lak Dargwa's Kaitak dialect as well as the Lezgian language Tabasaran.

Whereas Güldenstädt basically confined himself to offering lexical materials and comments based thereon, Klaproth ventured into the realms of grammar. But this can hardly be seen as an advance in view of the superficial and erroneous nature of his observations, such as when he asserts that Avar has no grammatical gender, even though his adjectival citations shew gender agreement with their epithets. And, like many others, he allowed his expectations based on the structures of Latin and Greek of what languages should be like to influence his descriptions of these non-IE tongues, assigning accusative cases to systems where no such case is attested. Another backward step in comparison with Güldenstädt is Klaproth's belief that Abkhaz and Circassian are not genetically related, though he postulates an entirely false link between Circassian and Finnish, Ostyak and Vogul based on some superficial lexical similarities, wild speculations which reveal Klaproth's ignorance of the fundamental principles underlying the proof of linguistic genetic affiliation (viz. systematic sound-correspondences demonstrated by strict application of the comparative method). Whilst recognising the closeness of Nakh to Daghestanian, Klaproth again draws parallelisms with Samoyed, Vogul and other Siberian forms.

Klaproth's addendum does contain the first examples of full sentences published in printed format for Avar, Andi, Lak, Dargwa, Chechen, Kabardian and Abaza. However, these texts were not recorded by Klaproth — Güldenstädt had them already in 1775, and Klaproth took them with him on his own expedition, adding only the variant for Abaza in, as stated above, an unspecified dialect.

Interestingly, in a despatch of 26 Nov 1836 from Simferopol to the Academy's Secretary Fren, the Ossetic specialist Acad. Schøgren charged: 'I deem it my duty to send to the Academy evidence from which it is revealed that Klaproth did not undertake, if not all, at least most of the excursions but has composed them on the basis of the statements or written sources of others, specifically the reports on the peoples living along the Kuban and beyond for the most part and particularly from p. 206 to the end are translated word for word from a document lodged at the general HQ without a squeak about his source' (vid. Brosset's *Bibliographie analytique* 1887, p. 535).

#### 4. Marie Félicité Brosset (Jeune)

The French orientalist Marie Félicité Brosset (Jeune) (1802-80) came to Georgian (and Armenian) studies from Chinese. Invited to Russia in 1837, he was elected to a fellowship of the Russian Academy the following year; he continued to work at the Academy until 1880, when illness took him back to France, where he died. In St. Petersburg Brosset laid the foundation of Georgian(-Armenian) philology. He read a

cycle of lectures on Georgian and Armenian between 1839 and 1841 at the University and Academy, but then appointment as Director of the Public Library forced him to abandon this.

Brosset had practical command of both Georgian and Armenian and contributed to the spread of the knowledge of these cultures in Western Europe in the fields of both philology and history, though his interests and writings extended to archæology, numismatics and epigraphy. In 1847-48 he travelled around Georgia and Armenia, publishing the results in three volumes entitled 'Rapports sur un voyage archéologique dans la Géorgie et dans l'Arménie exécuté en 1847-1848' (St. Petersburg, 1849-51). He introduced the non-Georgian reading public to the native historical chronicles with his translation into French of the collection of texts known as 'Kartlis Tskhovreba' (Life of Kartli = Georgia), including an 18th-century addition to the corpus in the shape of the so-called 'Geography of Georgia' by Prince Vakhusht' Bagrat'ion (member of the royal family); these translations came out in seven fascicules between 1849 and 1858.

Before Brosset arrived in Russia, he had already made a contribution to the foreign study of Georgian. It seems from what Brosset tells us that the Asiatic Society in Paris was only a few months old when it decided to place the study of Georgian top of its list of desiderata (according to a lecture by St. Martin of 6th Jan 1823). As a consequence they commissioned Klapproth to prepare both a grammar and dictionary. As already stated, a Georgian-French/French-Georgian dictionary appeared in 1827, being based on the 17th-century list of 3,084 entries published in 1629 in Rome by the missionaries Stefano Paolini and Niceforo Irbach (see the 1983 facsimile-reprint as part of 'First Printed Books in Georgian', edited by A.S. Chikobava and J.L. Vateishvili, Tbilisi, Khelovneba Press) as well as that in Piralof's self-tutor. As for the grammar, Klapproth intended to build on a work he had found by an Italian missionary, but the project was dragged out, and by the time of his death in 1835, he had completed only 112 pages, which took him merely to the verb, which is the most demanding part of Georgian grammar. The task thus passed to Brosset, who produced his 'Eléments de la langue géorgienne' (lvi+336 pp., Paris, 1837).

Brosset had published lithographically in Paris in 1834 a 291-page work he called 'L'art libéral ou Grammaire géorgienne'. The book consists of 17 chapters, each followed by illustrative material with translation. Previous works by such pioneers as the 18th-century Georgian patriarch Ant'on I, the 17th-century Italian missionary Maggio, and the 18th-century member of the Georgian royal family Davit Bat'onishvili are considered, but Brosset bases all opinions he expresses on Georgian materials, being the first non-Georgian capable of manipulating original data.

That said, there are, quite naturally, errors of interpretation. One of these concerned the case called in Georgian *motxrobiti* (literally 'narrative'), which is



conventionally translated as 'ergative'. The debate about the nature and essential function of this case continues to this day (see, for example, the discussion in Hewitt 2004), but Brosset argued for it not to be treated as a separate case at all. In the 1837 grammar the original author, Klaproth, had stated on p.13 the following: 'Le démonstratif: მოთხრობითი *mothkrobithi*; c'est un nominatif qui perd ordinairement sa dernière voyelle, et prend à la fin la syllabe მან.' To this Brosset appends his 'corrective' note on p.xxvi: 'Le démonstratif, que les grammairiens géorgiens appellent narratif, n'est point un cas à part, puisque le pronom démonstratif explétif მან se décline avec tous les cas des noms, et aux deux nombres.' The hypothesis of a relationship between the origin of the case-endings and the 3rd person pronoun is a justified one, but the fact is that a *motxrobithi* or ergative or narrative case does need to be treated as a distinct entity. Consider the example quoted by Brosset in his syntactic discussion on p.242 of the 1837 publication:

მოსრნის	მკვცხ.ო	და ნადირ.ნ.ო
mōsrnis	mqs̄ts.n.i	da nādir.n.i
it-strikes-them	beast.PL[URAL].NOM[INACTIVE]	and game.PL.NOM
ისარ.მან	ჩემ.მან	სრეულ.მან
isar.man	tʃəm.man	sreul.man
arrow.ERG[ACTIVE]	mine.ERG	thrown.ERG

'My arrow when cast regularly strikes the beasts and game-animals'

where, without more ado, the Nominative argument (in fact the object) is described as the subject, and nothing is said about the true subject in the Ergative case in *-man*.

Though Brosset's contribution to the study and knowledge of Georgian was immense, it is regrettable that on the matter of its genetic classification he misplaced it by categorising it as a member of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family — it is perhaps pertinent to recall that for many years in the 19th century Armenian was also placed within Indo-Iranian because of the large number of Iranian lexical items adopted by it over the centuries, but, unlike Georgian, Armenian does fall within the Indo-European family, as correctly demonstrated by Heinrich Hübschmann later in the 19th century, where it forms a separate branch. On Georgian's own rich store of Iranian loans see Andronik'ashvili (1966).

Another to ascribe Indo-European status to Georgian and the sisters was the German Franz Bopp who delivered two lectures in Berlin in 1842 and 1845 which were later published firstly with the title *Über das Georgische in sprachverwandtschaftlicher Beziehung* (1846) and secondly entitled *Die kaukasischen Glieder des indo-europäischen Sprachstammes* (1847). In these he argued for an Indo-European origin for the 'Iberian' or 'Georgian' (*recte* 'Kartvelian') family that encompasses Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz and Svan. Bopp did not know Georgian, nor did he visit the Caucasus but relied both on Brosset and, for supplementary

information on Georgian's congeners, on a contemporary fellow-German who did and who provided Bopp with preliminary results of his researches on the ground. If a competent presentation of Georgian grammar (essentially its morphology) became available to W. European readers with the works of Brosset in the 1830s<sup>14</sup>, it fell to a Fellow of the German (rather than Russian) Academy of Sciences in Berlin, namely Georg Rosen, to extend philological investigation to other Caucasian languages. Rosen's 38-page review of Laz (*Über die Sprache der Lazen*) was read to the Berlin Academy on 11th November 1843 and published in 1844. On 1st October 1844 the Berlin Academy was again treated to another presentation by Rosen, to wit his second linguistic survey from the region, this time on Ossetic (*Über die ossetische Sprache*), whilst his third paper, delivered on 31st January 1845, gave short surveys of Mingrelian, Svan and Abkhaz (*Über das Mingrelische, Suanische und Abchasische*). The last two papers were published in 1846 and entitled *Ossetische Sprachlehre nebst einer Abhandlung über das Mingrelische, Suanische und Abchasische von Dr. Georg Rosen*; they totalled 84 pages. Of these 43 are devoted to Ossetic, including Klaproth's lexical list, as verified by Rosen; Mingrelian is examined in 9 pages (48-57), Svan in 13 (57-70), and Abkhaz in 12 (70-82). Rosen studied each of these languages on native soil, not knowing Georgian when he applied himself to Laz. He made a number of important observations, not least remarking on the relationship between Georgian's own dialects and noting that the closeness of Laz to Mingrelian could best be viewed as assigning them co-dialectal status of a single language, as is done to this day within Georgia, where the language concerned is designated Zan; Svan he rightly saw as the most divergent of the Kartvelian sisters. Rosen commented on the closeness of Abkhaz to Circassian. Rosen hoped to locate on Abkhazian territory a tribe named 'Azra' by the English traveller James Stanislaus Bell, who lived among the N.W. Caucasian peoples resident here and encouraged them in their war with Russia (see his justly famed 2-volumes *Journal of a Residence in Circassia During the Years 1837, 1838, and 1839* (London, Edward Moxon, 1840)). Bell had given on p.482 of his 2nd volume a short word-list to illustrate the languages of the three peoples he encountered, whom he named Azra, Abaza, and Adighe. Rosen failed to identify the words assigned to the so-called Azras as being in fact Abkhaz; the language styled by Bell (as indeed by Evliya Çelebi in the 17th century) 'Abaza' was actually Ubykh, and the Ubykh word for 'Abkhaz' was /ɑ̃zɑ̃/; Adyghe is another term for Circassian based on the Circassians' self-designation /ɑ̃dɛʁɑ̃/.

One might object to Rosen's stadial conclusion that in terms of their structural development Abkhaz and Circassian represent an older (?more primitive) stage than that found in the Kartvelian family, just as he was wrong in deeming the first two

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<sup>14</sup>This discounts the not fully competent account by Maggio from 1640.

languages, which belong, as we know, to the N.W. Caucasian family, as being genetically related to Kartvelian. However, he was right to distance (Iranian) Ossetic and the (Turkic) mountain-Tatar tongues (Balkar, Karachay) from the indigenous Caucasian languages, and right also to conclude that parallels such as similar sound-systems could be explained by centuries (if not millennia) of symbiosis. Interestingly, Rosen chose to write not only his Mingrelian and Svan but also Ossetic and Abkhaz examples in the Georgian script (with transcription), the best-suited naturally developed writing-system to represent any Caucasian language; for Laz he had employed Arabic (with transcription), in good Ottoman fashion. To Rosen belongs the accolade of having been the first to make these four unwritten (sc. at that time) languages the object of scholarly study and thus accessible for the first time to serious philological investigation.

Though Bopp's attempt to associate Kartvelian with Indo-European looks like a reinforcement of the opinion somewhat earlier expressed by Brosset, the two scholars subsequently argued in print over the respective paths by which they had come to this (erroneous) conclusion. Of course, the discipline of comparative philology was still in relative infancy in Brosset's and Bopp's day and was yet to recognise the absolute fundamentality of the principle of strict sound-correspondence in the demonstration of genetic affiliation. Even so, it was somewhat odd that neither Brosset nor Bopp thought to search for sound-correspondences, preferring to look at such features as verb-endings and case-markers. Failure to recognise the true nature of the ergative case was an obstacle here, for Bopp tried to link the nasal ending of the ergative case in such pronominal forms as *iman* 'that one' with the accusative case's nasal ending in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin.

Brosset delivered a reply to Bopp's assertions, based in part on Rosen's observations, in a lecture at the St. Petersburg Academy on 1st Nov 1844. Brosset was able to correct some of Bopp's misinterpretations of basic data and took issue with the above-mentioned analysis of the nasal-ending, pointing out that the ergative/narrative could not function as object of a transitive verb, which is the essential role of the Indo-European accusative. Brosset himself had been led to his mistaken conclusion by such features as the 'shared' lexical stock he recognised between Georgian, Armenian, Old Persian, Avestan and Sanskrit, or what he saw as a commonality in the declensional systems between Georgian and Sanskrit and Avestan. See the last page of his 1834 publication for a summary of the relevant data.

The genetic links within the Caucasus are still debated (particularly with reference to the relationship between the North Caucasian languages); there was a period when N.W. Caucasian Abkhaz was argued to be related to (even a dialect of) Georgian, but those (and there are some, especially in Georgia) proposing this today are deceiving themselves and doing so principally through political motives. As already stated, the

Kartvelian family is now, almost without dissent, recognised to be an isolate, though it must be said that of all the indigenous Caucasian languages, it is the members of the Kartvelian family which have the most Indo-European 'feel' about them (sc. in terms of the use of fully developed subordinate clauses, something which marks them out from the rest).

### 5. Anton Schiefner

As Georgian is the only autochthonous Caucasian language with a long (and distinguished) literary tradition, it was hardly surprising that it should have become the focus of attention for Western orientalists, as the classification of the world's languages got underway in the first half of the 19th century, winning for itself descriptions in Brosset's grammatical monographs. If Rosen presented a smattering of materials from a handful of the other, then unknown languages of the Caucasus to his philological peers, it fell to another ethnic German, Anton Shiefner (1817-1879), from Tallinn, to produce a full (for its time — sc. without any detailed treatment of syntax) grammatical description of a North Caucasian language, work accomplished with a level of professional expertise (especially in the rigour of the analysis applied to the sound-system) that went beyond anything then available for ANY Caucasian language (including Georgian).

After completing his university-education in St. Petersburg, Schiefner spent 6 months studying oriental languages in Berlin. To his pen belong such works as 'Tibetan Studies' and a German translation from Finnish of the Kalevala epic. A fellow of the St. Petersburg Academy, he turned his attention at the close of 1853 to Bats (or [Ts'ova-]Tush), a now moribund language of the [Vei]Nakh family, spoken, then as today, in only a single village (Zemo Alvani) in eastern Georgia. Schiefner never visited the Caucasus but worked with materials sent from the region, supplemented with information provided by native speaker consultants, collaborating with the priest Giorgi Tsisk'arishvili on Bats for 9 months. The first results of this collaboration were published in 1854 under the title *Kurze Charakteristik der Thusch-Sprache* (Bulletin historico-philologique, t. XII, No. 8/Mélanges Asiatiques, t. II, 402-429). There followed in 1856 the 160-page monograph *Versuch über die Thusch-Sprache oder die kistische Mundart in Tuschetien* (St. Petersburg). Pages 6-28 were devoted to phonetics, 29-89 to morphology, 90-104 to examples of speech with translation, 105-158 to a lexicon, and the final two pages contain a list of errata. He observed a phenomenon pertaining to the use of the ergative case (styled by Schiefner the 'instructive') which has attracted the attention of linguists to this day, namely that 1st and 2nd person pronouns stand in the ergative with intransitive verbs, if the verb has any semantic trace of *Selbstthätigkeit* 'activity', to illustrate which he quotes:

as lei	'ERG talk'
aḥ lei	'youERG talk'

Schiefner's status as the pioneer at the Russian Academy for the study of the Caucasian languages was reinforced by his subsequent publications: *Versuch über das Awarische* (St. Petersburg, 1862, 54 pp.) and *Versuch über die Sprache der Uden* (St. Petersburg, 1863, 110 pp.) — both Udi and Avar are spoken in Georgia, though the main Avar speech-community resides in Daghestan (N.E. Caucasus), whilst Udi is spoken in one village in S.E. Georgia and also over the border in today's Azerbaijan. In addition to these three important contributions of his own, Schiefner over the course of the next decade worked on the monographs produced by perhaps the most famous of the early investigators of Caucasian languages, the soldier-linguist Baron Pëtr Uslar (Peter von Uslar), who took advantage of his time as soldier in the Caucasus to work on a number of the languages spoken in the territories which were then either being or had recently been conquered by force of Russian arms. In addition to full descriptions of Abkhaz, Chechen, Avar, Lak, Dargwa/Dargi(n), and Lezgi (plus Tabasaran, published only in 1979 in Tbilisi from the rediscovered manuscript), Uslar was also the only person to do serious work on Ubykh before the migration of the entire population to Turkey. Before Uslar's works appeared in the original Russian, Schiefner translated them into German, reworking the materials (especially the phonetics) in so doing and presenting them according to the order and principles he had established in his own grammars, which is often preferable to the presentation in Uslar's Russian originals. Schiefner's versions were published under the standard title *Ausführlicher Bericht über des Generals Baron Peter von Uslar ... Studien* with the relevant language-name preceding the final word of the title. The order of publication of the German versions was: Abkhaz (1863), Chechen (1864), Lak (1866), Dargwa (1871), Avar (1872) and Lezgi (1873), published in the series *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg*.

We have already moved beyond the strict confines of this conference's theme, but it was important to include Schiefner as the academician who in a sense built on the work begun only in the 1770s by Güldenstädt's commission and set the study of Caucasian languages on a path that can be recognised as truly modern. Whilst much valuable research within the Caucasus was conducted in a variety of disciplines during the 19th century by, or on behalf of, the Imperial Russian Academy and published in such admirable series as *Sbornik Materialov dlja Opisanija Mestnostej i Plemën Kavkaza*, it must not be forgotten that for most of this period the peoples of the North Caucasus were subjected to a brutal war of imperial aggression — indeed, it was military matters that brought Uslar to the Caucasus, as just observed.

Afterword

How an individual defines his/her identity is a complex matter, and it is by no means clear if those who led the investigations into the Caucasus and its peoples on behalf of the Russian Academy (or, more widely, the world of scholarship) and whose linguistic discoveries have been sketched above were concerned with the question. They simply researched the languages they met and described the customs of the peoples who spoke them together with the geography, natural habitat and resources of the lands these peoples inhabited. If it follows that for those pioneers a people was to be defined (or identified) by the language they spoke as mother-tongue, then, as a professional linguist, the author of these lines has to express his sympathy with such a view. What any representative Abkhazian, Circassian, Svan, Mingrelian, Georgian or Ossete would have said in the first half of the 19th century in answer to the question: 'What is your identity?' is anyone's guess; even today this same question might pose problems for some members of some of these speech-communities. What is certain is that identity can be manipulated, and attitudes to language can play a crucial part in this.

The 10th-century Georgian scholar Giorgi Merchule in his *Life of Grigol Khandzteli* defined Georgia as 'the land in which church-services are performed and prayers said in the Georgian language' (Georgian Encyclopædia vol.3, p.164). Given the ethnic disturbances that disfigured Georgia's move to independence from the late 1980s through to the early years of precarious independence in the early 1990s and indeed which still scar that part of Transcaucasia today, it is not surprising that issues of ethnic identity have played a part, based on such arguments as: (a) who counts as a Georgian, and (b) where and when the ecclesiastical language was Georgian. With reference to the Ossetes of S. Ossetia, no-one to my knowledge has ever claimed this Iranian language to be part of the Kartvelian family, and so the arguments against the Ossetians' rights to ownership of 'Georgian' territory have rested on the status of these Ossetes as 'newcomers' to territory south of the Caucasian chain. Georgia's first post-communist president, the late Zviad Gamsakhurdia, used to make the demagogic claim that Ossetes found a foothold south of the Caucasus by following the Red Army over the Caucasus in the early 1920s, a claim which sits with some difficulty alongside Reineggs' conclusions quoted earlier.

Many in Georgia still view the Abkhazians as interlopers on 'Georgian' soil, arguing in their case that they came south across the mountains less than 500 years ago, and this theory, known as the Ingoroq'va hypothesis (after the self-taught literature-expert P'avle Ingoroq'va, a strong proponent of it in the 1940-50s, though it was first advanced in the late 19th century by the historian Dimit'ri Bakradze), is worryingly even now being taught in Georgian schools as part of the history of Western Georgia. But additionally at different times the idea has been advanced that Abkhaz is related to Georgian. Not all those who have advanced this idea have done

so for base political purposes, but some have, for, if Abkhaz could be seen as some sort of dialect of Georgian, then it could be argued more plausibly that Abkhazian territory is in a sense also Georgian territory. With reference to Abkhazia, the use of Georgian as the official ecclesiastical language has also been pushed by some Georgian historians further back in history than actually justified; there are sources suggesting that Greek had not been finally supplanted by Georgian even in the 11th century. No-one today can seriously argue that Abkhaz and Georgian are genetically related. I doubt that at any time in history could an ethnic Abkhazian have identified himself as Georgian. But the situation is not so clear-cut for many Mingrelians and Svans.

As we have seen, in the 1840s Rosen recognised that the closeness of Mingrelian to Laz was such that they could be regarded as co-dialects of a single language, the standard practice in Georgia. But many (if not most) Georgians believe that Mingrelian and Svan (and, if they thought about it, Laz too, though this language, being mainly spoken in Turkey impinges, less on their consciences) are nothing more than dialects of Georgian; the fact that during the Soviet period from c.1930 all Mingrelians and Svans were officially designated for census-purposes as 'Georgians' reinforces this view (and vice versa!). This attitude, or a closely parallel interpretation according to which these languages [sic], not being written or taught in schools, have the same socio-linguistic status as regular Georgian dialects (and thus styled 'socio-linguistic dialects', a term quite devoid of meaning), often goes hand in hand with the belief that, as Georgian serves as literary language for these peoples today, it must always have done so, just as it served as their ecclesiastical tongue. Those who hold these opinions are untroubled by the question of how Mingrelian and Svan could have developed as fully fledged languages, if Mingrelians and Svans always spoke Georgian (of course, if one views them as mere dialects, the question has no meaning); equally such believers forget the evidence of the Italian missionaries who were active in Mingrelia in the 17th century, when they tell us that even the clergy (let alone ordinary lay folk) had a weak grasp of Georgian. The main reason why so many are vehemently opposed to acknowledging the true status of Mingrelian and Svan is the fear that, if, as speakers of a distinct language, Mingrelians in particular — there are so few Svans that the issue in Svanetia is not so threatening — were given language-rights, they might then demand political rights, leading possibly to further dismemberment of the Georgian body politic. If those who treat Mingrelian and Svan as dialects (whether haunted by such fears or not) were to examine the texts considered above, they might think they have found evidence to support their opinions, for do we not find in Gldenstdt's text Georgian, Mingrelian and Svan described as *Georgianische Mundarten*? The answer is 'yes', but then Gldenstdt was only anticipating a usage of the term *Mundart* (or dialect) that became frequent in

the later writings of Indo-Europeanists: in this usage the possibly long-dead parent-language was seen as somehow continuing to live on as a conceptual entity such that its actual daughter-languages [sic] could be described as its conceptual co-dialects. Compare what Gldenstdt has to say of the relationship between Abkhaz and Circassian: 'Die Abchasetische oder Abasaische und Tscherkessische Sprachen haben eine Mutter, sind aber so verschiedene Mundarten derselben, dass man die Verwandtschaft nicht berall findet, sondern theils mhsam suchen muss' (p. 48, vol. II of Gelashvili's Georgian version).

The early investigators, by confining themselves to describing the languages, their peoples and territories, were not confusing themselves or the subjects of their research as to anybody's ethnic identity. We should perhaps follow their lead and not allow ourselves to become slaves to later obfuscations of identity, recognising the inherent importance of offering support for minority-languages (and, of course, their speakers). The scholarly endeavours facilitated by the Imperial Russian Academy set an admirable standard; sadly, the interest of the Russian state (Imperial or post-communist) in the Caucasus was not confined to scholarship. In a 'Memorandum respecting Georgia', marked 'confidential' and printed for the British Foreign Office on 24th March 1855, James Brant wrote from Erzeroum suggestions for a British protectorate for Georgia once Russia was ejected therefrom. Towards the end of his paper Brant remarked: 'She [Russia] will be deprived of the power of attacking Turkey and Persia; and both nations, *relieved from her baneful contact*, will have leisure to attend to the improvements of their social institutions' (stress added — BGH; see Burdett 1996.91). History was not to follow such a course as that envisaged by Brant. If the knowledge and discoveries about the Caucasus, its peoples and languages given to the world by researchers despatched there from the Russian Academy in the first half of the 19th century is placed in the scales against everything the region and its peoples have suffered from their (to quote Brant) 'baneful contact' with the Russian state, would the good necessarily be judged by any objective commentator to outweigh the harm?...

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## Appendix

### Family-groups of the indigenous languages of the Caucasus:

- a. South Caucasian (Kartvelian): Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz, Svan
- b. North West Caucasian: Abkhaz-Abaza, Circassian, Ubykh (extinct since 1992)
- c. Nakh-Daghestanian, consisting of:
  - North Central Caucasian: Chechen, Ingush, Bats
  - North East Caucasian (Daghestanian):
    - α. the Avaro-Ando-Tsezic(Didoic) sub-group, which is especially rich in lateral consonants, consists of:
      - Avaric: Avar
      - Andic: Andi, Botlikh, Ghodoberi, K'arat'a, Akhvakh, Bagvalal, T'indi, Ch'amalal
      - Tsezic: Tsez (Dido), Khvarshi, Hinukh, Bezht'a (K'ap'uch'a), Hunzib (some treat these last two as co-dialects)
    - β. the Lako-Dargic sub-group consists of:
      - Lakic: Lak
      - Dargic: Dargwa (Dargin) -- the language vs dialect status of the K'ubachi, Chiragh, and Megeb varieties is disputed
    - γ. the Lezgif sub-group consists of:
      - Lezgi(an), Tabasaran, Rutul (Mukhad), Ts'akhur, Aghul, Udi, Archi, Budukh, Khinalugh, Kryts'