

patrilineal descent. That may well be so for many of the cases discussed here, but ‘flatter’ societies, operating on heterarchical or even anarchic principles, can also be identified in prehistoric Europe. Such societies lend themselves less well to the grand narrative approach favoured here, but they must also be considered in our wider interpretations of social and cultural change in European prehistory.

Overall, this is a worthy and thought-provoking addition to Cambridge University Press’s new ‘Elements’ series, which clearly fulfils the brief of providing concise, timely and authoritative accounts of key current developments in the discipline. It deserves to be widely read.

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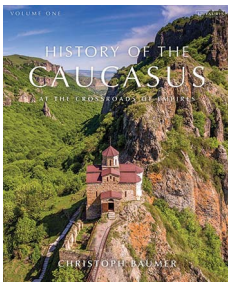
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CHRISTOPH BAUMER. 2021. *History of the Caucasus: at the crossroads of empires*. Volume 1. London: I.B. Tauris; 978-1-78831-007-9 hardback £30.00.



The Caucasus is a protean place. To classicists, it is where Prometheus, condemned for bringing fire to humankind, was chained in eternal hepatic agony. To the thespian, it is where Brecht’s Chalk Circle lay, to the geopolitician, a mosaic of truculent polities such as Chechnya, fomenting global discord. It gives its name to one of the major physical types, the Caucasian, in the bioanthropology of *Homo sapiens*. And to the prosaic geographer, it is a chain of mountains reaching from the Black Sea to the Caspian, the formal southern boundary between Europe and Asia.

Christoph Baumer’s cultural Caucasus is broader than that: it stretches from the Russian republics, such as Dagestan and Ingushetia, with a northern limit at the Don, and far south of the cordillera into eastern Turkey and Lake Van, and north-western Iran to Lake Urmia. All of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are included, embracing such contended

territories as Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The map of languages (p. 7) is a daunting demonstration of ethnic, historical, and now political complexity. Recent aDNA work by David Reich's Harvard laboratory has shown how this pivotal region of the Bronze Age Southern Arc reflects that diversity and may be the ultimate origin of Indo-European and Anatolian languages, rather than the steppes north of the Black Sea.

Baumer has already published a four-volume history of Central Asia (Baumer 2012–2018) and knows how to combine the big picture with the telling detail (enhanced here by exceptional and helpfully-dated colour photographs of landscapes, sites and objects: for these alone the book is exceptional value).

Baumer's broad-brush Caucasus has been a focus of human economic and social activity from the Palaeolithic onwards: the skeletons from Dmanisi in Georgia are among the oldest hominins outside Africa, at around 1.8 Mya. They feature in the second of eight main chapters, followed by one on prehistoric cultures from the Neolithic to the Iron Age (of which the Kura-Araxes and Kurgan are the hitherto best-known). Then the first Caucasian states—Urartu and Biainili, and their clashes with Assyrians from the south and Cimmerian/Scythian steppe peoples from the north, followed by Alans and Huns—see also the early Greek emporia spreading round the Black Sea.

Chapter 5 covers the expansion of Achaemenid Persia, and the first Armenian kingdoms, later sandwiched between the emergent empires of Parthia and Rome (the Legio XII Fulminata under Domitian even reaching the Caspian coast south-west of Baku). The uneasy balance between them allowed a series of south Caucasian kingdoms—Lazica, Kartli (Iberia) and Albania among them—to flourish and form fertile ground for the introduction of Christianity from Constantinian Rome. This became a state religion and has left us, from the following centuries, the stunning churches and monasteries that adorn today's Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as some of the Russian dependencies north of the mountains. The bulk of Baumer's narrative and illustrations are in the south, however, where the emergence of short-lived states, such as Abkhazia and Nakhchivan, lies behind some of today's conflicts a millennium later.

Then came Islam. Muslims, Khazars and Byzantines fought, often across religious lines, in a changing mosaic of polities and dynasties, in which shifting loyalties and outright treachery were prominent. The battles of Bagrevand in AD 772 and Manzikert in 1071 sealed the triumphs of the Abbasid and Seljuks, respectively.

While the main narrative ends in the eleventh century—the Byzantine defeat at Manzikert in 1071 being the pivotal event—a coda brings the story rapidly up to date, including COVID-19 in 2020. Invaluable appendices list the multiplicity of local languages, and dynasties from *c.* 900 BC to AD 1200, including the Artaxiads and Arsacids, several lines of Bagratuni and Shaddadids, Yazidids and Hashimids. An impressively complete (to 2019) bibliography and endnotes support the complex narrative of the main text; the 10 maps are useful, but many more would have been welcome, as would more detail in those provided. This is stated as Volume 1 of Baumer's project: the second will, presumably, cover the second millennium AD and be well worth looking forward to.

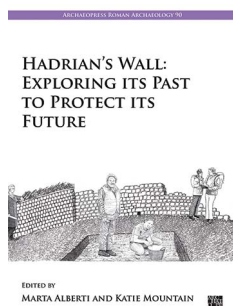
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MARTA ALBERTI & KATIE MOUNTAIN (ed.). 2022. *Hadrian's Wall: exploring its past to protect its future* (Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 90). Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-80327-274-0 paperback Open Access.



This Open Access book was published as part of the celebrations of the 1900th anniversary of the commissioning of Hadrian's monumental Wall. The 15 chapters focus on the researching, management and interpretation of the Wall, which is now a World Heritage Site. The editors explain in their Preface that the volume aims to provide “a candid discussion of the present of Hadrian's Wall, warts and all” (p. vii). To produce the book, they approached a range of authors, from several well-known Wall specialists to early career researchers and practitioners, with the aim of broadening the range of voices included (p. 155). There is a plethora of recent books

on the Wall, including synthetic accounts by Nick Hodgson (2017) and Matthew Symonds (2020). Yet, Alberti and Mountain's volume includes some very different perspectives on the monument and provides an insight into the opening up of the research agenda for the Wall to a broader group of participants.

Thirteen of the papers focus on Hadrian's Wall, while two additional contributions address the interpretation of the Roman Limes fort and archaeological park at Ruffenhofen (Bavaria), and the management of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site (of which Hadrian's Wall is part). While many previous papers have focused on the marketing, management and interpretation of the monument, I concentrate here on three of the contributions within the volume that explore aspects of the Wall that have seen only limited discussion.

One such paper is a joint article by two living-history practitioners, Robin Brown and Kevin Robinson, who run businesses introducing visitors to the well-known archaeological monuments along the Wall. Past archaeological discussions of Roman re-enactment are often directly critical, viewing practitioners as unaware of the concerns of Roman archaeologists, and sometimes suggesting that these performances give the public a militaristic and over-positive