

A VIEW FROM BYZANTINE SIDE OF THE RIVER AKAMPSIS

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This article by a well-known scholar in Byzantine Studies, President of the *Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies* Anthony Bryer, was first published in Amsterdam in 1991 as a foreword to the English translation of one chapter of the *Kartlis Tsxovreba (Life of Kartli)*. The English translation of the Georgian Chronicle dating back to the Period of Giorgi Lasha and written by an anonymous author was translated by Katharine Vivian. (*The Georgian Chronicle. The Period of Giorgi Lasha*. Translated by Katharine Vivian. Adolf M. Hakkert Publisher. Amsterdam 1996). The article and its Georgian translation are published on agreement with Prof. A.Bryer.

In the foreword to this book English expert in Byzantine Studies, Anthon Bryer, analyses the Medieval Georgian historiography with broad erudition, bringing parallels to ancient Byzantine and European chronicle authors, revealing an in depth analysis of hidden nuances of historiography. The article shows the great admiration the author feels towards the Georgian historians as well as a critique of the narrative by Panegyric authors. We believe that it is highly interesting and crucial to make the article available for Georgian readers interested in the History of Georgia.

Editor

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Vakhtang VI, King of Georgia, died in Astrakhan in 1737. His own epitaph concludes:

“I hunted over the hills and slew deer and wolves.

I wrote a book of laws, so that the judges should have no cause for dispute;

Also a commentary on *The Man in the Panther's Skin*; but to other writings I lay no claim.

The Knights of my entourage were renowned for their courtly manners.

Finally the world took from me my riches and royal lineage." [1]

Vakhtang was over modest. Courtly though their own knights may have been, it is hard to contemplate his royal contemporaries, such as George II of England, collating the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; or Louis XV of France, editing Froissart. But to the infinitely more appealing and sad Vakhtang VI we owe a recension (on which he lays no claim) of his kingdom's annals. As a scholar sovereign he is in the tradition of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and, nearer to the Caucasus, of his own predecessor David IV, who had to look up from his books in the hunting and battle saddle, and got through the Apostolary twenty-four times in one year.

In getting to the heart of Georgia, Katharine Vivian is in the tradition of her predecessor, Marjory Wardrop. Like Vakhtang VI, both Englishwomen naturally tackled Shota Rustaveli's epic romance of *The Knight in Panther Skin* [2]. Now Katherine Vivian has followed Vakhtang further with this splendid sequence of the Georgian Royal Annals. To English readers they make compulsive reading: artless and artful accounts of a medieval society which, with its courtly knights and over-mighty barons, *fiefs* and *arriere-fiefs*, bishop-chancellors and kings on the make, are uncannily familiar. For those whose concept of feudalism is of the classic Anglo-Norman kind of the same time, it should, and ought to, be familiar. But the societies of the later Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, or even of Froissart, developed quite independently. It is no more use looking for Palpable links than it is seeking the origins of Western Romanesque architecture in Armenian Ani (both have been done). The transitory colonial transplant of an adaptation of Western forms of Feudalism in the Crusader states in the Levant must also be overlooked, for they hardly impinged upon the Caucasus. This must not stop Western readers making comparisons between David IV's

Georgia and Norman England, but they should remember that in doing so they must leapfrog the intervening Byzantine Empire, grudgingly recognised by Armenian and Georgian annalists as a kind of paradigm; but it was built on quite different principles and, to complicate matters, was then entering a sort of feudalism of its own.

Like most Byzantines and Byzantinists, I lay no claim to knowing what went on over the far bank of the rushing Akampsis (Choruh). This river which flows out of Anatolia into the Black Sea is an historic divider and, after several empires on either bank, remains the border between Turkey and the Soviet Union near its final stretch. Frontiers are quiet places. The broken bridge over the Araxes (Aras-Arpa Chay) at Ani, which marks the same border, is more finite than the mouth of the Akampsis. Here, and necessarily on different occasions, one must either peer west from Georgian Batumi through sheets of rain; or east from a Turkish teahouse at Sarp, to see nothing very much, though upstream where the Akampsis actually breaches the border, divided villages are said to sing across the river at night [3]. They have been divided in effect since the sixth century, for the Georgian Laz of the Pontic coast west of the Akampsis were embraced by the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, of which they made very good use without losing their identity and this is why they hardly figure in these Annals. Upstream the Akampsis snakes south and west through staggering gorges into what is now Turkey, rising past Ispir to near Bayburt where the Armenian Bagratids, who shared kings with the Georgians, had their origins and a castle, last slighted by the Russians in 1828. This is Tao and Klarjeti, where Armenians and Georgians had to live together, as is architecturally demonstrated as Ishhan (p. 112), and where the forests and summer pastures of Shavshat gave them a shared economy. It is encouraging that young Turkish scholars are beginning to take an interest in the Georgian monuments at least which these Annals name and that village *muhtars* appreciate their tourist potential in a now quiet and still beautiful Alpine land [4]. But the Akampsis remains an undeniably tricky river to ford. It has been done notably from the Georgian side by Elguja Khintibidze, who reveals real scholarly links between

Georgia and Byzantium (some solid, some quirky) [5]; And by Mariam Lordkipanidze's masterly unravelling of the nature and authorship of these Annals in the Introduction which follows this Preface. Unlike them, I am a one-eyed Byzantinist for I do not have Georgian. But after having to squint through Brosset's version of these Annals [6], Katharine Vivian gives a fresh view. So I ask forgiveness of Georgian colleagues for my distorted vision and plead at least that I swim the Akampsis whenever I see that formidable stream. But I write from its Byzantine bank.

What has Katharine Vivian gives us? *Annals* is the wrong word. This is not the relay race of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (which comprises true annals). Our Georgians do not have the same obsession with the calendar. It is typical that while the day of Queen Tamar's death is recorded, there is no mention of the year (p. 91). Precise dates were important to medieval monasteries and chanceries. For example, the nearest Greek equivalent of these authors is Michael Panaretos, court chronicler of nearby Trebizond, who dates 132 events, usually by year of the cosmogony, indiction, month, and weekday and often by the hour too [7]. He is no parallel. Nor is there any Eusebian framework of the unfolding of a universal Christian destiny in Georgian terms, although these texts share a Biblical backbone with Armenian chronicles, which is less obtrusive in contemporary Byzantine histories.

If these are not Annals, what are they? Probably unfairly, I compare them with the work of two contemporary Byzantine writers: Anna Comnena (who had an expressed sense of how History should be written and happily ignored it), and Nicetas Choniates (who was the sort of level-headed pessimist who used the conventions to real purpose to describe and comment on the times he lived through) [8]. The answer is that our Georgians placed themselves in the same category: they were historians.

It is today hard to realise the difficulties of trying to be an historian (always a part-time craft) in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. In Byzantium itself there were barriers of having to employ and adapt a literary language to an ancient genre, in a Christian guise, before thinking of how to convey any secondary

information over the hurdle. Anna Comnena and Nicetas Choniates surmounted and manipulated such barriers. Whoever they were writing for, their accounts were personal.

Our Georgian historians were writing under even greater constraints, for they appear to have been composing court history, commissioned by kings, for courtly knights who may have made history but cannot read it yet want it to last for ever, as it has done, in the magic of writing. Our historians cannot escape in their style, language or allusions, into the small world of monastics, scholars and high civil servants, which in Byzantium was held together at this time in a sort of self-appreciation circle by their letters to each other in mandarin Greek. Nor are they a free as whoever put together the *Chronicle of the Morea* for Frankish courtly knights later, who wanted to hear of their father's deeds in Greek, French and Catalan: mostly straight spoken language put in writing without any nonsense about Aristotle. Our Georgian historians lay between the two requirements, which is why I venture that their tone is sometimes uncertain. History is by definition a secular pursuit, but they, or our Georgian historians' patrons, are snobbish enough to want to dignify it with external conventions and maybe literary style, without making it inaccessible. At the simplest level we have here official history, which simply means reading between the lines, or sometimes asking why there are no lines at all. For example, why does the official record of Demetre I (1125-56) have fewer lines than his important years? Is it because he ended up in a monastery to join those who wrote rather than made history?

Adept as they were at making use of it, even Anna Comnena and Nicetas Choniates did not carry their learning lightly, but among our Georgian Historians, for whom it was even more hard-won, it sticks out awkwardly, like the bones of a famished man. The skeleton is Judaeo-Christian historiographic convention, but the flesh is Caucasian. Sometimes they do not hang together so easily as in Byzantium. Katharine Vivian's translation makes such good reading today because of the native Caucasian matter. Whether Shota Rustaveli belongs to the reign of Tamar or not, this is the ethos of *The Knight in Panther Skin*.

Nevertheless, our writers insist that they are epigone of an ancient historiographic tradition, and so should be judged. Here comes the ambiguity: how much did they know of, and understand, the classic rules of the game? Anna Comnena and Nicetas Choniates were very careful to cover their tracks if they did not. But David IV's historian must boast his learning to his patrons. He stands on the shoulders of the Ancients. They are not Herodotus, Thucydides or Polybius, but an idiosyncratic trio: Homer on the Trojan War, Aristobulus on Alexander, and Josephus on the sufferings of the Hebrews. Homer was better known to Anna and everyone since as a poet than an historian. Aristobulus, technician to Alexander, was known to Strabo and Arrian but his works were long lost and neither Anna nor Nicetas pretend to know them. At this point one wonders whether our Georgian is not just pulling a fast one on an audience who know no better than to be suitably impressed. Yet, in a later reference to Alexander he may hint at something we no longer know from Aristobulus (p.125), and Josephus (equally ignored by our Byzantine contemporaries) was in fact available in Georgian translation by a pupil of the eleventh-century Byzantine pundit, Michael Psellos [9].

Despite their laboured interpretation of Platonic ideals, notions of the Five senses and seven-fold girdle of the world, these Georgians may always have more in their classical lumber than one suspects. Clearly their skeleton of historiographic reference is more than a display of ill-placed *topoi*. That it does not articulate their narrative or opinion to any perceivable extent is a kind of relief. I write deliberately patronisingly from my side of the Akampsis, where twelfth-century Byzantines such as Anna or Nicetas were more or less comfortable in their conventions. Their fish-eye view shows the Caucasus as a Babel tower on the rim of the acceptable Chalcedonic Orthodox world, but it must be said that Anna Comnena refers to Georgia and its Iberians almost as rarely as Marcel Proust mentions New Zealand [10]. But by transferring the fish-eye to the Caucasus, perhaps to a royal monastery like Gelati, or to the Chqondidi's chancery, you have a quite different scan, where Constantinople may light the night but is only the loom of

a lighthouse below the horizon. Its fall to the Fourth Crusaders in (undated) 1204 is dealt with oddly (p.163), but perhaps with the ultimate truth of rumour. It is no more odd than a story that circulated Turkish Georgia in the 1960's, of the Three Brothers-in-Arms in the Second World War. They were the Atatürk, Churchill and Hitler, who beat Stalin (albeit a Georgian) hollow. Such ex-sights are valuable as insights. What is history?

Katharine Vivian has chosen a group of twelfth-century regnal histories, which are topped and tailed by others to stretch from 1089 to 1222. In Anatolian terms they run from the battle of Manzikert (Malazgert) in 1071 (after which the Seljuk Turkish state of Rum eventually emerged to replace much of Byzantine Anatolia), to the battle of Kose Dagh in 1243 (when the Seljuks in turn went down to the Mongols). Neither landmark is directly discernible in these histories. Safe in Constantinople Michael Psellos does not dwell much on Manzikert either, nor does Michael Panaretos even mention Köse Dagh, less than 125 km. away, as part of the court memory of Trebizond. They are right, and it is also right that sometimes quite minor ambushes of Türkmen caravans are placed in the foreground of these Georgian histories.

A wider view shows that between 1089 and 1222, and despite Turks and Türkmens, the lands beneath the Caucasus in fact lay only on the fringe of greater conflicts. This gave them a certain respite, and their Georgian kings their heyday. The Armenians had enjoyed a similar respite between (shall we say) 885 and 1018, when Empire and Caliphate had fought themselves to a standstill (or rather, their proxies had come to an accommodation), and let those in between have their day. What did the Armenians make of their break? Dynastic competition engendered patronage of highly inventive architecture which stands today in Aghthamar, Kars, Ani and other haunted sites. But it was also self-defeating. Armenian kings of Kings, Artzruni of Bagratid, remained no more than that in a society where who your grandfather's great-grandfather was eventually counted for more than what office your king gave you. The kings squabbled; no centralized monarchy emerged. When the Georgians' turn came, his historian makes it clear that David IV (II)

was from 1089 more than a King of Kings, but created a state that could survive its kings.

David, surely a Builder' rather than "Restorer", is the hero king among heroes and the elements of his achievement are established from the start: a centralizing and expansionist monarchy which used its Church to counter feudatories, succeeding where the Armenian Kings of Kings had eventually failed; a terror to the Türkmens who pleaded to the Seljuks for protection; and conqueror of Ani and Tbilisi. Between the lines he was quite ruthless. But the conventional attributes of monarchy are there. Armenian and Byzantine monarchy was essentially Old Testamental in its models, to which our Georgians add notes of their own. There is King David, of course, Solomon the lawgiver and, less commonly, Hezekiah; like the "Macedonian" dynasty of Byzantium, Alexander comes in too. In dealing with their Church, David IV and Tamar are second Constantines; more curiously, among Saints David is an Antony, a second Basil, and Tamar a Chrysostom (whose views on women before he died on his way to exile there were apparently not widely known in Georgia). Oddest of all is that David becomes Goliath. Queens are taken in their stride: Giorgi III's wife is a leonine mountain of God. Tamar should pose the greatest problem the greatest problem, but does not in a generous amalgam. She is David, a Solomon, an Alexander, a Constantine (not Helena), a friend of orphans, widows and lion cubs, a pious pilgrim who goes barefoot to Metekhi. She is even an Apollo besides being a passable poet. But she is not just an honorary man: she is an Aphrodite whose beauty irradiated her coronation at the age of sixteen. In Basil Ezosmodzghvari's account one can perceive the genesis of the legends which were to encrust the memory of the great queen until every castle standing or a rock in Georgia was attributed to her, at a point where it is still possible to read between the lines. There is no gainsaying the disabilities of her sex to her office in her time.

She cannot ride to battle, although Kars demands to surrender to her in person. She is at the mercy of her consorts, principally her first, Giorgi Bogolyubskoi, whose very name and abominations Basil cannot bring himself to specify, and ingeniously understates

her last, bigamous, encounter with "the Russian", whose real crime was to have aroused the *didebulni* feudatories and clan chiefs in rebellion. That the Russian Bogolyubskoi only just failed reveals that the kingdom which David IV built was only just strong enough to survive a queen. But it did.

David and his successors made successive bishops of Chqondidi, places safe from the Türkmens in Mingrelia, vizir-chancellors of state. Watch out for them in these histories. Royal servants who were not heads of their Church, it is difficult to find parallels to them elsewhere: the Syrian Jacobite Mafrian is only a remote comparison. Behind it may lie the danger of the Katholikos himself of the Georgian Church becoming an a Becket. Perhaps one did. What lies behind the terse entry on the death of Katholikos Mikael IV Marianidze (1178-86), who had crowned Tamar but "was mourned by none, great or humble, for everyone detested him" (p.62)?

David's centralised administration (if it can be so called, for the Georgian, like the early Norman, kings had no fixed capital and their secretariat may be envisaged perched unhappily on their files in a wagon which lurched after their monarch from castle to monastery) continued to evolve during these years. Tamar's historian Basil specifically mentions her addition of an atabegate to her highest offices of state (p.141). Indeed the administration had to grow in the face of the continued rivalry of other great feudal and clan leaders before the monarchy itself could emerge as more than the greatest of them, by reason that through its clerks it could exploit the resources of the others to defend all against Türkmens and other dangers. In fact the Georgian monarchs went one better by expanding their state into regions where their own *didebulni* had no prior claim, and could therefore be ruled directly. But there were evident difficulties in digesting these new conquests and infiltrations up the valleys - particularly in the north around Tbilisi itself, in the east along the Akampsis river, and in the south Kars, Ani and the plain of Lori. Basil notes the Turkish phenomenon of *uj-begs* or frontier lords on these areas. The term is a calque of the Byzantine *akritai* or marchers. These texts list their Georgian

equivalent border barons who faced (and intermingled with) their counterparts [11].

The expanding twelfth-century Georgian state was therefore inescapably multicultural and its Armenians made it heterodox too. We learn that Demetre I made efforts to repopulate Tao-Klarjeti with Georgians (p. 49, p. 48) and all our monarchs used their Church and a network of still impressive monastic foundations to express a specifically Georgian cultural unity. It was Tamar's duty to turn mosques into churches and give the exotic spoils of war to her monasteries. But it was also the strength of these Georgian monarchs to be bold and confident enough to accept the identities of their neighbours who became their subjects and, where appropriate, to reflect the cultures of Islam as well as the Byzantine East. Whatever their professed faiths, all parties in fact shared much in common, perhaps symbolized in the game of horseball (something like polo), which Tamar's historian mentions (p.128). Under various guises - Persian *chougan*, Byzantine *tzykanion*, Frankish *chicane*, Georgian "*trocus*", *tskhenburti* and *isindi* - it is clear that in it all these peoples shared the same instincts of cavalry and competitive knighthood, and knew the rules of a wider game.

Our historians' attitudes to non-Georgian subject, friends and foes is therefore particularly revealing. Among the fifty distinct peoples and languages of the Caucasus which could still be distinguished in this century, the Turkic Altaic-speaking Qipchaqs to the north loom larger in these histories than older established Kurds in the south (where, as in the vegetable world nettles and docks grow together, Kurds are found historically in prickly embrace with Armenians [12]). There are whole variety of Muslims and Turks, some newly arrived from the eleventh century. Of these our historians get to the heart of the problem in describing the Turkmens (whom, to get to the heart of the problem, I define here as pastoral Turks). Their long encounter with the Georgians was not so much ethnic as economic. Basically, the Turkmens were free in their high summer pastures, but needed Georgian lands below the tree line in winter. David IV blocked their tidal rhythm, but our historians make clear that they remained an annual threat.

particularly along the Akampsis and Araxes valleys. By contrast, Georgian rulers were "kings of the forests", lands alien to Turkmens. The call of the forest was even too much during Tamar's final winter illness, when her entourage decided "to leave for the forest as was her custom" (p. 89) [13].

But on the whole, Muslims and the remote Caliph are treated with respect. In David IV's reign the Malikshah is less reprehensible than the Christian Liparit - for he was a traitor. It was a period of symbiosis. A single example is another Melik, Mughith Al-Din Tughrilshah, son of the Seljuk Sultan Kilij Arslan II, who in 1194 found himself a vassal of the Armenian Leon I of Sissouan, was from 1203 ruler of Armenian Bayburt and Georgian Ispir (where he may have founded not just mosques but Greek churches), and in 1223 became some sort of vassal of the Grand Komnenos Andronikos I of Trebizond, only to find himself soon after in the clutches of the formidable Queen Rusudan of Georgia (1223-45), who demanded that his son be baptized to marry her. For a *ghazi* defender of Islam, it was the final indignity. This Melik who played by common Seljuk, Armenian, Byzantine and Georgian rules, died a wiser man in 1225 [14].

But the Georgians complained that the Armenians should be ordered off the pitch because they bent the rules. It is a very old story. From the Byzantine side of the river I can dare say that the basic trouble was that Georgians and Armenians shared too much in common: feudal and clannic systems (even dynasties); essentially agricultural as opposed to pastoral economies; distinctive Churches which in the absence of a state assumed some of its functions and marked their very identities; a long and shared historical experience of Rome and Persia, Byzantium and Islam; and their geography. The last became a source of aggravation when the enlarged Georgia state embraced lands to the south in which Armenians were still numerous and where until recently their own Bagratids had principalities: Turks and Georgians competed for their great walled city of Ani in particular (p. 106). Georgian rulers used both Muslim and Armenian leaders, but Georgian distaste for Armenians, so vividly expressed in these histories, evidently reflects a popular view

of one Christian people for another, which, incidentally, was conventionally shared by the Byzantines. There is no getting away from it, or the fact that the Armenians got their own back on the Georgians (and less often the Byzantines) in the privacy of those litanies of woe, their own chronicles and colophons [15]. Our authors accurately reflect secular history in being significantly unaware of, or uninterested in, what should have been the real difference between the parties: that Byzantines and Georgians subscribed to Chalcedon while the Armenians supposedly did not. Instead it was a consequence which was the irritant: differences of outward forms of worship. As there had been between Byzantines and Armenians before, there were formal debates - more show trials than synods of Whitby. One was called by David IV and his Katholikos Ioane IV (1100-42), where the Armenians were loquacious as was their wont (a common complaint), from the first to ninth hour, at which the bluff David rendered them speechless by speaking to the point in plain language (one wonders about interpretation) (p. 40). The most intriguing encounter, however, was staged by Tamar and her Katholikos Ioane V (1208-10), in which the Armenians were hedged by a prelate who appears to have been a Katholikos of Aghthamar if there was not an interregnum at Van then. As usual, the Armenians talked and talked. But even the Georgian faithful were appalled at the proposal of their Katholikos to break the deadlock: trial of their respective consecrated hosts by dog. It has the air of a *topos*, a memory perhaps of when the Byzantines removed Gagik, last Bagratid Armenian ruler of Kars, to Amaseia (Amasya); and the Arzruni Armenian princes of Van, to Sebasteia (Sivas) - where they behaved "worse than the Turks" [16]. Among other indignities, the Byzantines alleged that Gagik had tied their Metropolitan of Kaisareia (Kayseri) up in a sack with his dog. He may, however, have been asking for it, for the Byzantine bishop had called his dog "armen". Romanos IV Diogenes deposed both Armenian kinglets on his way to Manzikert in 1071. But the byzantine emperor may too have been asking for it, for his defeat and capture there by the Seljuk Turks was in historic Armenians lands between Van and Kars, and it was not the Turks who

exploited its northern stretch at first, but our Georgian kings from David IV who stopped in at Kars and Ani.

What is puzzling in the curious later encounter between Georgians, Armenians and a dog, is that any Armenian Katholikos should have risked exposure to the secular authority of another Church. Armenians had early learnt the arts of the underdog, one of which is to lie low. Tamar was a second Constantine and Constantine was not a happy precedent as convenor of a Council if one disagreed with him. Perhaps this shadowy Katholikos was already in Georgian secular hands. Anyway, it is not surprising to find that, as Tamar's first historian gleefully puts it, the Armenians were left like frogs without a pond.

The wider Christian pond was that of the Byzantine Empire, where the Komnenoi, a kind of distant touchstone, proved their Orthodoxy by persecuting heretics like Armenians, and where there were Georgian monasteries and mercenaries. This translation of the Georgian histories follows old-established convention in rendering Byzantium ("Saberdzneti") as "Greece", but such a recent concept and geographical term is perhaps misleading: to Georgians, Armenians, Turks (and for that matter "Byzantines") it was the "Roman" Orthodox Empire. On its wider stage Georgians followed Armenians in pursuing careers, but they seem to have been more cultural than political. Now that the phantom eleventh-century Byzantine *thema* - province of Iberia had receded, the "Romans" were no threat to the Georgians. But this distancing muffles news of them in these histories. They record the marriage of a Georgian princess to a minor Komnenos (Alexios Bryennios), which is almost ignored on the Byzantine side, yet give Manuel Komnenos an otherwise obscure scion, improbably named Polycarp. (p. 115). But things come into sudden perspective with the arrival of the wayward Andronikos Komnenos with his cousin and mistress, Theodora of Jerusalem, at the court of Giorgi III. In fact it was a Saltukid who gave Andronikos a fief nearer the Komnenos ancestral home in the Pontos, but some sort of marriage alliance must have been set up (from which the Andronikashvili were to claim descent), for Tamar assisted Androniko's grandsons and her

kinsmen, the significantly named David, and Alexios the first Grand Komnenos, to set up the so-called Empire of Trebizond in 1204. On these points the Georgian and Byzantine sources at least agree. But Basil's account in his history of Tamar has precipitated much spilt ink subsequently, in which it is depressing to find that Georgian and Russian historians presume the new state to be a sort of appanage of Tamar's, and Greek scholars of course argue the opposite [17]. The Akampsis River, over which Tamar's troops crossed, remains as wide as ever. It is therefore salutary to come across this famous passage again in the flow of the whole context of these histories (p. 87). Its inconsequentiality is striking. The undated event is tied up with Tamar's difficulties in sending funds to Georgian monasteries in Byzantium (for which there is some confirmation) after Andronikos Komnenos was succeeded in Constantinople by the Angeloi on his lynching there as emperor in 1185. The inescapable crux is that we do not know what Alexios and David Komnenos were doing between the death of their grandfather (not father, as the Georgian historian disturbingly indicates) Andronikos in 1185 and their setting up the Empire of Trebizond under Tamar's undoubted auspices in 1204. Speculation that they were being groomed at Tamar's court is simply speculation, and one wonders whether the passage has been worth so much ink. But a second reading reveals, as so often in these tales, that it should be taken seriously, although, as so often, there is an uncertain note. In cataloguing places taken by Alexios, David and the Georgians in 1204, the historian Basil makes a serious attempt at the geography of the Pontos west of the Akampsis, or rather he records what look like two overlapping *peripli* into chains of coastal names which are run together. The first runs east to west (the Georgian-eye view and actual sequence of conquest): Lazia, Trapizoni, Limoni, Samisoni, Sinopi. Noteworthy is that "Samisoni" is an early attestation of the Turkish version of the place then still called "Ami(n)sos" by Byzantines. But most remarkable is "Limoni", in its place in this chain undoubtedly Greek Lamnia, a strong-point long lost in the shifting delta of the Iris (Yeshil) river. Elsewhere I have argued that it is the Kinte of Byzantine-Danishmendid campaigns in the 1140s, last so called by

Idrisi in about 1154; and that it re-emerges as Limnia, first mentioned in Greek sources under the year 1297 [18]. The Georgian list provides an earlier (if maybe retrospective) reference to the place under its new Greek name, which is descriptive - for the delta is pocketed with lagoons. This confirms the continuous strategic importance of the place and that Basil's history must be taken seriously. But then, and maybe unwittingly, he doubles back and starts again with a different and overlapping sequence: Kerasundi (Giresun), Kitiora (Kytoros, Cide), Amistria (Amasra), Araklia (Herakleia, now Ereghli). A glance at any portulan will show that Kythera Island, which has been proposed for Kitiora, is out of the question. But a second glance reveals how Alexios and David actually conquered the Pontic shore, ending up in Sinope and Herakleia respectively [19]. These sequences have the ring of authenticity and again remind us that the classical scholarship of Georgian historians on the other side of the Akampsis must never be underestimated and still holds enigmas.

This is true of these histories as a whole. Within their literary and historiographical conventions, and with their fish-eye view of the world beyond Kartli, their prophecies of what should be recorded are authentic: the prophecies of Evlogi are just as important as rumours of what is happening in Constantinople. Katharine Vivian has matched their authentic vigour, of which the great monastery at Gelati or the painted caves of Vardzia are also surviving monuments. This legendary period, from 1089-1222, was also the authentic heyday of the Georgian state. There is a typically enigmatic hint in the life of Giorgi Lasha of what was to bring it to an end: "And some foreign troops invaded..." (p. 143). The Mongols had come.

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6. Brosset M. F., *Histoire de la Georgie* (St. Petersbourg 1849), appendix.
7. I note the Georgian edition, translation and commentary here, because it deserves to be better known among Western Byzantinists: A. Gamqrelidze, "Mikheil Panaretosis Trapizonis Khronika", *Masalebi sakhartvelosa da kavkasiis istoriisathvis*, 33 (Tbilisi 1960), 1-98.
8. Cf. A. Kazhdan, in collaboration with S. Frankin, *Studies on Byzantine literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Paris 1984).
9. Wilson N.G., *Scholars of Byzantium* (London 1983), 164.
10. Not such an outlandish comparison. I think the score is Anna Comnena, *Alexiad.* 2 (VI, ix, 4; XV, vii, 8); Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*. 0. For Byzantine historians on Georgia, see the collection in *Georgica. Scriptorum Byzantinorum excerpta ad Georgian pertinentia*, esp. VIII, ed. S. Qaukhchishvili (Tbilisi 1970).
11. The locus classicus is P. Wittek, *The rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London, Royal Asiatic Society, 1963), 16-32; cf. C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey* (London 1968), p. 149.
12. B. Geiger, T. Halasi-Kun, A. H. Kuypers and K. H. Menges, *Peoples and languages of the Caucasus* (S-Gravenhage 1959), is a useful compendium.
13. Cf. S. Vryonis, Jr., *The decline of medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the process of Islamization from the eleventh through the fifteenth century* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1971), 279-87.

I have tried to analyse the same phenomenon west of the Akampsis in "Greeks and Türkmens: the Pontic exception," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 29 (1975), 113-49, reprinted in A. Bryer, *The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos* (London, Variorum, 1980) Collected Study V.

14. A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *The Byzantine monuments and topography of the Pontos* (Washington, D.D, Dumbarton Oaks Study XX, 1985), I, 352-55.

15. E.g. Aristakès de Lastivert, *Récit des malheurs de la nation Arménienne*, tr. M. Canard and H. Berbérian (Brussels, Bibliothèque de Byzantion V, 1973), xxvi, 70-71.

16. Cf. A. Bryer, "A Byzantine family: the Gabrades", Collected Study III, 167.

17. A sample: A. Kunik, "Sur l'origine géorgienne de la grandmère du premier empereur de Trébizonde," *Bulletin de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St. Petersbourg*, 2 (1854), 734ff.; A. Vasiliev, "The foundation of the Empire of Trebizond (1204-1222)", *Speculum*, 11 (1936), 3-37; C. Toumanoff, "On the relationship between the founder of the Empire of Trebizond, and the Georgian Queen Tamar," *Speculum*, 15 (1940), 299-312; N. Iorga, "Une nouvelle théorie sur l'origine et le caractère de l'empire de Trébizonde," *Revue des Etudes Est-Européennes*, 13 (1936) 172-76; and reviews in the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 32 (1932), 411-12; 36 (1936), 223, 492; I. T. Pampoukes, *Pontiaka*, 2 (Athens 1947); O. Lampsides, *Michael tou Panaretou periton Megalon Komnenon* (Athens 1958), 109-14; Panaretos, ed. Gamqrelidze, 47-54; M. Kursankis, "Autour des sources Géorgiennes de la foundation de; "l'Empire de Trébizonde", *Archeion Pontou*, 30 (1970), 107-16; the same's "Relations matrimoniales entre Grands Comnènes de Trébizonde et princes Géorgiens," *Bedi Kartlisa*, 34 (1976), 112-27; K. Salia, tr. Katharine Vivian, *History of the Georgian Nation* (Paris 1983), 200-1; and most recently a communication by S. Karpov, *XVe Congrès International d'Etudes Byzantines* (Athens 1976).

It seems to me that while Tamar's role as mobiliser of the take-over of the Pontos by her kinsmen the Grand Komnenoi is undoubted, it could not have taken place so easily without a local sense of autonomy and identity long fostered by Gabrades and Komnenoi; and that while subsequent Grand Komnenoi naturally took Georgian wives as often as

they gave princesses to Byzantine and Turkmen rulers (the different form of intermarriage is significant), the character of their state and administration was essentially Byzantine Pontic rather than Georgian. I do not overlook the part played by their Georgian Laz subjects west of the Akampsis, but they had long been within the Byzantine orbit. One barrier to Tamar's exerting greater influence was that Georgia was not basically in substantial maritime contact with the West on its own account (hence perhaps the problems of supplying monasteries under the Angeloi, and why the conquest of the Pontos in 1204 appears to have been by land). But in practice it is fruitless to seek serious Georgian control in the Pontos after 1222, because the Mongols supervened.

18. Panaretos, ed. Gamqrelidze, 19; ed. Lampsides, 63; Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, I, 96-100.

19. I. D. Saltzes, *Chronika Kotyoron* see "David Komnenos" in a future volume of the *Archeion Pontou*.