

From one End of the (Post)Sasanian World to the Other. Mobility and Migration between the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf in the 4th to 9th Century CE

The background or »infrastructure« for the diffusion of »Sasanian Elements in Byzantine, Caucasian and Islamic Art and Culture« (as was the title of the conference at the RGZM in Mainz in October 2017) was provided by the mobility of people, objects and ideas (the two latter in turn being »transported« by people again) within and beyond the borders of the (post)Sasanian world¹. Recently, empires have been characterised as »regimes of entanglements«, establishing and maintaining »network structures in which certain structural and habitual circumstances – principles, rules, standards and mutual expectations – allow for the establishment of long term linkages. (...) imperial formations (Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire, Mughal Empire) are examples of regimes of entanglements where religions and ethnicities, as well as certain functionaries interact«. These linkages can also remain effective after the fragmentation, the collapse or conquest of an imperial sphere and exert a sustaining impact on axes of mobility and exchange². In this paper, I describe such phenomena for the Sasanian and post-Sasanian world.

In the transition period between the Sasanian and post-Sasanian/early Islamic period around 650 CE, the Armenian scholar Anania from the province of Širak (in the central area of historical Armenia) wrote a collection of mathematical problems, which he used in teaching. A considerable number of them stemmed from everyday life of the Armenian elite of the 7th century CE, which also included service to the Sasanian Great King³. In his problem no 2, Anania describes a journey of one of his kinsmen from one end of the Sasanian Empire to the other, including also the transfer of a valuable object: »One man from my relatives was summoned to Balḥ [in modern-day Afghanistan] and found a valuable pearl. Returning home, he reached Ganjak [in Azerbaijan] and sold half of the pearl for fifty drams per grain. And coming to Naxčavan, he sold a quarter of the pearl for seventy drams per grain. And arriving in Dvin [the capital of Armenia] he sold one twelfth of the pearl for 50 drams per grain; and when he came to us in Širak, he had left 24 grains of this pearl. Now, work out from

that which remains how many [grains] was the pearl and how many drams the value of the pearl? (see **fig. 1**)«⁴.

We also learn from other sources that members of the Armenian elite travelled to the Central Asian frontier regions by order of the Sasanian regime. During the reign of Great King Peroz I (458-484 CE), who was involved in constant warfare with the Hephthalites, noble cavalry troops were transferred from Armenia to the area of Harev/Herat in modern day Afghanistan⁵. Nearer to the lifetime of Anania, Smbat Bagratuni, called »Xosrov Šum« (Khusraw's joy), between 590 and 616 CE rose to a prominent position at the court of Great King Khusraw II (590-628 CE). As we learn from the Armenian history attributed to Sebēos, »it happened at that time that Smbat Bagratuni became pleasing in the eyes of King Khusraw. He gave him the marzpanate of the land of Vrkan [Hyrcania, to the southeast of the Caspian Sea], made him prince over all that region, and favoured him even more with honours and authority. He heaped gold and silver on him, and robed him in expensive and splendid garments. He gave him the belt and sword that had belonged to his own father Ormizd. He put under his control Persian and Armenian troops, and ordered him to go to the land of his appointment«⁶.

The following campaigns against the Turks and their vassals in Central Asia led Smbat Bagratuni and his Armenian retainers all the way to the city of Balḥ, which they conquered and plundered. During these wars, Smbat Bagratuni also met descendants of Armenian deportees: »There was in that country a community deported from Armenia and settled on the edge of the great desert which extends from T'urk'astan and Dihistan. They had forgotten their own language, lost the use of writing, and lacked the priestly order. There was also there a group of Kodrik' [the exact origin of this group is unclear] who had been taken captive with our own men; and furthermore not a few from the Greek empire and from the region of Syria. The community of Kodrik' were infidels. But over the Christians there shone a great light. They were

1 Cf. also McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*. – Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*. – Quast, *Communication*.

2 Schuppert, *Verflochtene Staatlichkeit* 29 (citing from a research proposal of M. Mulsow / J. Rübke 2013, 17 [in German]).

3 Greenwood, *Anania Širakac'i*.

4 Greenwood, *Anania Širakac'i* 145 and 161 (text).

5 Łazar P'arpec'i 258-260. – Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 155, n. 11.

6 Sebēos c. 24: 96. – Thomson/Howard-Johnston, *Sebeos I*, 43-44.

confirmed in the faith and learned to write and speak their language. A certain presbyter among them who was named Abel was appointed to priestly rank in that land⁷.

This settlement of Armenian and other population in the frontier region southeast of the Caspian Sea was probably connected with the building and safeguarding of the Great Wall of Gorgān, which since the 5th century CE motivated the resettlement and deportation of groups from all over the Sasanian Empire⁸.

However, this involvement of Armenians in the Sasanian frontier politics in Central Asia⁹ also brought about the movement of people in the other direction towards South Caucasia. In Anania of Širak's mathematical problem no 21, we read: »Nerseh Kamsarakan, son of Aršawir and homonymous ancestor of this Nerseh, defeated the people of Balḥ in battle and captured very many of them. And on arriving at the royal court [in Ctesiphon], he presented to the king of the Persians the usual [share] of prisoners. And having counted the usual [share], he offered to the son of the king a 1/7 part. And being dismissed by them he turned to his country [Armenia]. And he went to the house of the darikpet [the master of the palace] and was greatly honoured by him, not as a naxarar¹⁰, but as one of the kings. And he gave him 1/8 of the prisoners. On coming to the spasayapet, whom they call the xoravaran [the »General of the West«¹¹], and being honoured even more by him, he gave him 1/12 of the prisoners. And having moved on, he arrived in his own country [in the province of Širak] and his younger brother Hrahat presented himself before him and he gave him 1/14 of the prisoners. And having moved on, the Armenian azatk' [members of the lower nobility] presented themselves before him and he gave to them 1/9 of the prisoners. Arriving at Vaḫaršapat [Ējmiacin, the traditional centre of the Armenian Church], he gave to the holy churches 1/16 of the prisoners. And when his elder brother Sahak came, he gave him 1/20 of the prisoners. And there were 570 people left. Now work out in total, how many were there«¹².

According to the solution of Anania, the original number of prisoners was 2240. The story of their transfer from modern-day Afghanistan first to the Sasanian imperial centre in Iraq and then to Armenia (see **fig. 1**) may have been connected to the above-mentioned campaigns of Smbat Bagratuni and other Armenian warriors to Balḥ in the 600/610s (see above). This would be in agreement with the attribution of this transaction to a homonymous ancestor (grandfather?) of Nerseh Kamsarakan, a contemporary of

Anania, whom we also know as »lord of Širak and Ašarunik'« from an inscription on the Church of Mren dated to the years 638 to 641 CE¹³.

However, this was not the first transfer of population from the (north-)eastern edge of the Sasanian sphere into the South Caucasus. These areas consisted of Khurāsān, that is the region between the city of Nišāpūr and the River Oxus (Amu Darya), and the areas beyond that river, that is Transoxania or in Arabic Mā warā' u n-nahr. The latter included the country of Sogdia between the Oxus and the Jaxartes (Syr Darya), centred on the valley of the Zar-afšān river with the renowned cities of Samarkand and Buḫārā. For Great King Khusraw I (531-579 CE), al-Balāḏurī claims that »in the land of Jurzan [eastern Georgia¹⁴] he established a city, Sughdabil [identified with the city of Curtaw to the southwest of Tbilisi], which he populated with a body of Sogdians and Persians, making it a fortified town«¹⁵. Other target areas of what J. H. Kramers in 1936 has called the »military colonisation of the Caucasus« included the urban centres of Dvin and Naxčavan in the valley of the Araxes as well as the important passage-ways across the Great Caucasus in Derbent at the Caspian Sea (in Arabic Bāb al-Abwāb, lit. »Gate of Gates«) and in Dariali (coming from Persian Dar-e Alān, meaning »Gate of the Alans«) to the north of Tbilisi. Recent excavations at the site of Dariali have identified a cemetery of the garrison whose oldest burials date to the period 428 to 598 CE; the fortress was then later also occupied by Arab troops (see below)¹⁶.

While all these examples so far included migrations at the order of the imperial regime or as consequences of the state's actions (especially warfare), other forms of mobility took place from private initiatives. Procopius, for instance, in the 6th century CE describes the power of attraction of the Armenian capital Dvin for traders from all over the Sasanian Empire and beyond: »Now Doubios [Dvin] is a land excellent in every respect, and especially blessed with a healthy climate and abundance of good water; and from Theodosiupolis [Erzurum] it is removed a journey of eight days. In that region there are plains suitable for riding, and many very populous villages are situated in very close proximity to one another, and numerous merchants conduct their business in them. For from India and the neighbouring regions of Iberia [eastern Georgia] and from practically all the nations of Persia and some of those under Roman sway they bring in merchandise and carry on their dealings with each other there«¹⁷.

This »cosmopolitan« character of Dvin is also reflected in an extract from the charter of capitulation the inhabitants of

7 Sebēos c. 24: 97. – Thomson/Howard-Johnston, *Sebeos I*, 44.

8 Sauer et al., *Great Wall of Gorgān*. – Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 154-155.

9 Cf. Alizadeh, *Borderland Projects*.

10 This term marks the uppermost echelon of the Armenian nobility. Cf. Adontz, *Armenia*.

11 This was one of the four regional commands established during the »reform« of Great King Khusraw I (531-579 CE). Cf. Gyselen, *The four generals*. – Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 65-67.

12 Greenwood, *Anania Širakac'i* 165-167.

13 Greenwood, *Inscriptions* 83. – Donabédian, *L'âge d'or* 108-110. Cf. also www.virtualani.org/mren/index.htm.

14 Cf. also Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 58-61.

15 al-Balāḏurī 306. Cf. also Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 159-160.

16 Kramers, *The Military Colonization*. – Alizadeh, *Borderland Projects*. – Sauer et al., *Northern outpost*. – Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 160-162 (also on the identification of the »Siyāsijjya« mentioned as a group settled by Xosrov I in Armenia and in Derbent).

17 Proc., *Bella* 2,25,3-4. – Garsoian, *Interregnum* 31 (translation). Cf. also Kettenhofen, *Dvin*. – Manandian, *Trade and Cities*.

the city negotiated with the commander Ḥabīb ibn Maslama in 654 CE after a major Arab invasion of the country: »In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. This is the treaty of Ḥabīb ibn Maslama with the Christians, Magians and Jews of Dabil [Dvin], including those present and absent«¹⁸. Both the Jewish and the »Magian« (Zoroastrian) presence in the city may have had its origins in communities of these faiths existing even before the Sasanian expansion in Armenia, but may have also profited from migration from other parts of the Empire in the centuries before its collapse. A case of individual non-elite migration of a Zoroastrian artisan within Sasanian South Caucasia is reported in an early text of Georgian hagiography. In the »Vita of Evstat'i Mc'xet'eli«, we read that »in the tenth year of King Khusraw [I, 540/541 CE] (...) a certain man arrived from Persia, from the province of the Arsacids; son of a Magian was he, and a pagan. His name was Gvirobandak, and he was a young man of about 30. He came to the city of Mzcheta and set himself to learn the shoemaker's craft. (...) At that season the Persians who lived in Mzcheta, cobblers and shoemakers by trade, used to assemble for their festival. (...) He used to live in the land of Persia, in the province of the Arsacids, in the town of Ganjak [in Azerbaijan]«.

Gvirobandak joined an already existing »colony« of »Persian« craftsmen in Mzcheta, the ancient capital of Iberia (eastern Georgia) north of Tbilisi. Later, after Gvirobandak's conversion to Christianity (and his baptism as Evstat'i), his fellow countrymen and former co-religionists effected his martyrdom by appealing to the Sasanian authorities in the city¹⁹. For our topic, the text is illustrative of the mobility of people and of manual skills within the Sasanian sphere.

In the above-cited passage, Procopius claimed that also traders »from India« were attracted by the mercantile opportunities in Armenia's capital Dvin. Besides this text, findings of seals from the city of Ardashir-Xvarrah/Firuzābād in a storehouse in Dvin at least hint at connections between the Caucasus region and the province of Fārs on the Persian Gulf²⁰. The Armenian Geography (Ašxarhac'oyc') of the mid-7th century CE, which is now also commonly attributed to Anania of Širak, also mentions other urban centres in the southern provinces of the Persian Empire such as Gondēšāpur in Kuzestān, »where fine sugar is made« (and probably traded to Armenia), as the text reports²¹. The coasts of the Persian Gulf are described as regions of origin of pearls (such as the one acquired in Anania's mathematical problems via Balḥ, see above) and as areas of intermediation with the wider world of the Indian Ocean²². The short recension of the Ar-

menian Geography already refers to Bašra, founded by the Arabs in 638 CE, as being »filled with merchants and ships coming from India and all parts of the orient«; but also this was a continuation of earlier patterns of maritime trade of the Sasanian era²³. All these examples provide some tentative evidence for the connections between the coastal and the Caucasian edges of the Sasanian world. Regarding groups of Indian or even Southeast Asian origin serving in the Sasanian army and referred to as the *Sayābidja* or the *Zutt* in later Arab sources, we hear nothing about their mobility towards the Caucasus region. Only under Arab rule, some of them were transferred from their areas of settlement in southern Iraq towards the frontier to Byzantium in north Syria and the region of Antioch²⁴.

In general, the Arabs resorted to methods of population transfer similar to those of the Sasanians, also in the South Caucasus (combined into the major province of »al-Armīniya«) after the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 685-705 CE) had established a stricter regime there²⁵. This included the deployment of Arab troops in fortresses on the frontier towards Byzantium and at the passageways across the Caucasus as well as in the urban centres of Armenia (Dvin, Naxčavan), eastern Georgia (Tbilisi) and Caucasian-Albania (Partaw), thus following the spatial patterns of earlier Sasanian-Persian domination. Equally, Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik (fl. 705-738 CE), a general and son of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, reportedly settled 24,000 Arabs from Syria in Derbent on the Caspian Sea in order to secure this passageway against incursions from the Steppe Empire of the Khazars to the north of the Caucasus²⁶. Around the same time, an Arab garrison, according to al-Balāḍurī, was also established in Dariali in the Central Caucasus; this was confirmed recently by archaeological excavations, which on the basis of burials document a continuity of this settlement from the early 8th to the 10th century CE (after its beginnings in the Sasanian period, see above)²⁷.

Similar to the case of Evstat'i Mc'xet'eli in the 6th century, Georgian hagiography provides another rare piece of evidence for non-elite, non-state-initiated migration also for the early Islamic period. In the »Martyrdom of St. Abo Tbileli«, written by Ioane Sabanisdse after Abo's death in eastern Georgia's capital Tbilisi in 786 CE, we read: »[Abo] was born of the line of Abraham, of the sons of Ishmael and the race of the Saracens. He had no foreign blood in him, nor was he born of a slave-woman, but of pure Arab stock on both his father's and his mother's side of the family. His father and

18 al-Balāḍurī 314-315. – Garsoïan, *Interregnum* 34.

19 Vita of Evstat'i Mc'xet'eli 35. – Lang, *Lives and Legends* 95. On the value of the text as historical source, cf. also Martin-Hisard, *Martyre d'Eustathe*. – Rapp Jr., *The Sasanian World* 33-103. – Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 177-178.

20 Kettenhofen, Dvin. – Huff, *Firuzābād*.

21 Armenian Geography, long recension V, 31: 74. Cf. also Shapur Shahbazi/Richter-Bernburg, *Gondēšāpur*.

22 Armenian Geography, long and short recension V, 32: 74-74A.

23 Armenian Geography, short recension V, 27: 71A and 265, n. 191A. Cf. also Whitehouse/Williamson, *Sasanian Maritime Trade*. – Ritter, *Vom Euphrat zum*

Mekong. – Howard-Johnston, *The India Trade*. – Morony, *Trade and Exchange*. – Preiser-Kapeller, *Jenseits von Rom* 149-151.

24 al-Balāḍurī 375. – al-Qadi, *Non-Muslims*. – Vacca 2017, 161-162 (also on the erroneous identification of the »Siyāsijjīya« mentioned as settlers in the south Caucasus for the Sasanian period with the »Sayābidja«). – Preiser-Kapeller, *Jenseits von Rom* 176-177.

25 Seibt, *Erfolge und Mißerfolge*. – Garsoïan, *The Arab Invasion*.

26 al-Balāḍurī 325. – Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 96-101, 158.

27 al-Balāḍurī 328-329. – Sauer et al., *Northern outpost*.

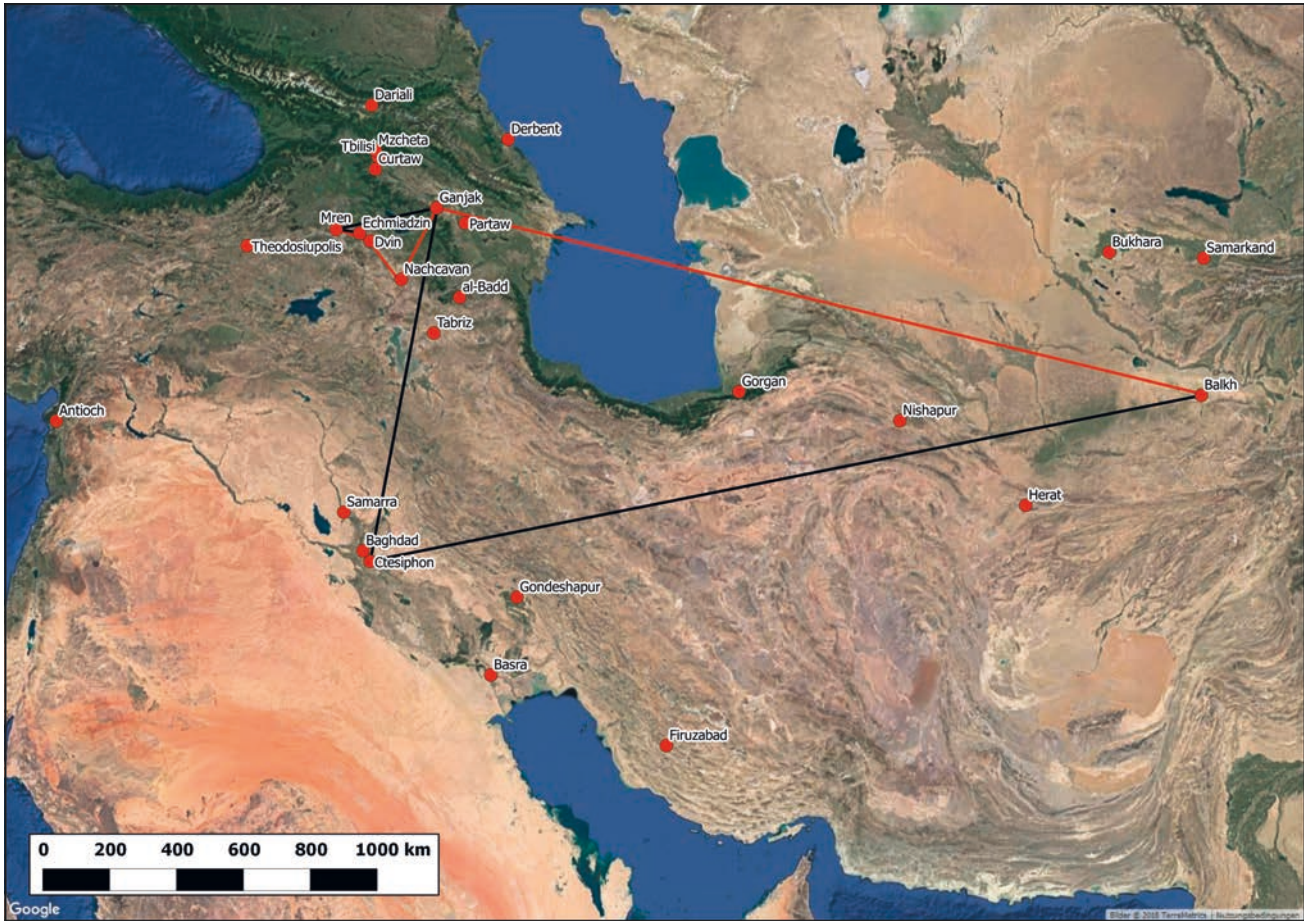


Fig. 1 Places mentioned in the text. Red line: route of the relative with the pearl described in Anania of Širak's mathematical problem no 2; black line: route of Nerseh Kamsarakan with the prisoners from Balh described in Anania of Širak's mathematical problem no 21. – (J. Preiser-Kapeller, 2018; base map: google satellite).

mother and brothers and sisters resided there in Baghdad. (...) Wishing to come here to Georgia with Duke Nerses [of Iberia], he entered into his service, because he was good at preparing fragrant scents and lotions, as well as being versed in the literature of the Saracens. (...) Then [ca. 782 CE] he went with Nerses to the land of Georgia and entered the city of Tbilisi, where walked about openly professing the Christian faith. Of the local Saracens who had known him before some swore at him (...). The blessed martyr of Christ was arrested and brought before the magistrate who was the Amir over the city of Tbilisi, who cast him into prison because of his Christian beliefs²⁸.

Again, the saint is a craftsman (a perfumer) migrating into the capital of Georgia, where he encounters an already existing »colony« of his (Arab) fellow countrymen and (Muslim) co-religionists, who after his »apostasy« initiate his martyrdom by appealing to the Arab authorities in the city. There-

fore, the text is again illustrative for the mobility of people and of skills²⁹.

I have treated other aspects of Arab settlement in the South Caucasus in the early Islamic period in a recent publication, where I also used the occurrence of various mints in Early Islamic coin hoards in Armenia to trace patterns of mobility³⁰. Therefore, I will focus on »Iranian« groups coming from within the former Sasanian sphere, especially again from the frontier areas between Iran and Central Asia. The Abbasids mobilised important parts of their military retinue from the regional, non-Arab elites, who preserved elements of a »Sasanian legacy« (see also below) in these areas. They were called the »Khurāsānīs« and after the overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate in 750 CE were deployed both on the frontier towards Byzantium as well as against insurgents in Armenia. They also received special quarters in the newly founded capital of Baghdad after 762/763 CE³¹. As the Armenian

28 Ioane Sabanisdse, The martyrdom of St. Abo Tbileli. – Lang, *Lives and Legends* 117. 122. 131. – Schultze, *Das Martyrium des Heiligen Abo*.

29 Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 160 and 178-179. – Schultze, *Das Martyrium des Heiligen Abo*.

30 Preiser-Kapeller, *Complex processes of migration*. Cf. now also Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*.

31 de la Vaissière, *Samarcande et Samarra*. – Karev, *Samarqand et le Sughd*. – Preiser-Kapeller, *Complex processes of migration*. – Preiser-Kapeller, *Central Peripheries*.

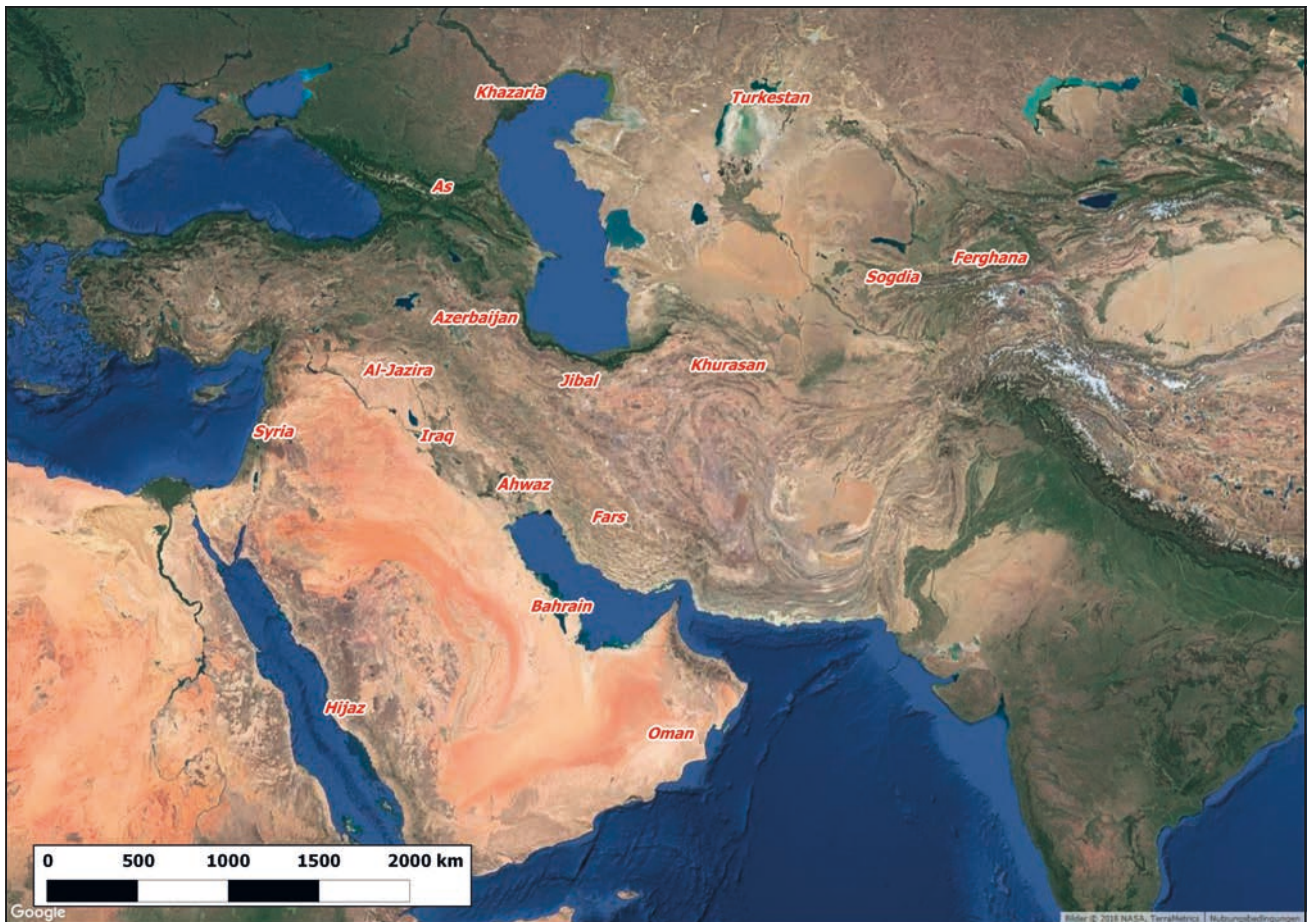


Fig. 2 Regions of origins of soldiers and settlers mobilised by the authorities of the caliphate for deployment in the South Caucasus between 700 and 860 CE according to the written sources. – (J. Preiser-Kapeller, 2018; base map: google satellite).

historian ʿUwond reports, a numerous group of Khurāsānīs accompanied the new governor al-Ḥasan ibn Qahtaba in 770/771 CE into al-Armīniya. Their regime ʿUwond describes as especially oppressing, leading to another rebellion of parts of the Armenian nobility³². After the failure of this uprising, further Khurāsānīs came with Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Ḥaraṣī, a client of Caliph Ḥārūn ar-Raṣīd (r. 786-809 CE), to the South Caucasus. This group together with earlier arrivals from their ranks in 795 CE raised their arms against a governor coming from the Arab tribes in northern Mesopotamia, Aḥmad as-Sulamī, in another conflict over access to revenues and resources³³.

But the most dangerous challenge to the Caliphate's authority in the region came from the insurrection of the Khurramites (from Persian *ḥorrām-dīnān*, the »followers of the joyful religion«), who, as Patricia Crone has analysed in detail, combined elements of Zoroastrianism with resistance to the Arab rule over the Iranian countries. Under the leadership of Babak in his inaccessible fortress al-Badd, they gained

control over vast parts of Azerbaijan between 816 and 838 CE, also making use of internal power struggles within the Abbasid dynasty. Babak allied himself with the neighbouring Armenian Prince Vasak of Siwnik', whose daughter he even married³⁴. Several times, the caliphs mobilised troops against Babak, but in vain, as for instance in the year 827 CE. On that occasion we learn that these campaigns not only brought further Arabs from northern Mesopotamia (the Ġazīra) to the South Caucasus, but also Muslims from Ġībāl (central western Iran), Baṣra (Iraq), Ḥiğāz, Oman and al-Baḥrayn on the Arab peninsula as well as from Fārs and Ahwāz in southwest Iran on the coast of the Persian Gulf (see **fig. 2**). Thus, again various edges of the former Sasanian sphere were brought into contact³⁵.

Yet success against the Khurramites' rebellion was only achieved by representatives of a new group of Central Asian retainers who, from 819 CE onwards, found their way to the central lands of the Caliphate with the Caliphs al-Ma'mūn

32 ʿUwond 158-160. – Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 105-106.

33 al-Ya'qūbī II 377; transl. Orthmann, *Stamm und Macht* 296. – Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces* 105-106.

34 Crone, *The nativist prophets* 50-72.

35 Orthmann, *Stamm und Macht* 186.

(r. 813-833 CE) and his brother and successor al-Mu‘tašim (r. 833-842 CE). Among them were Ḥaydar ibn Kāwūs Afshīn and his followers, who had only recently converted to Islam, stemming from the Sogdian principality of Ustrushana east of Samarkand (now in Tajikistan). These retainers were augmented with mamluks, i. e. military slaves, originating mainly from the Turkish regions of Central Asia. In 838 CE, they put an end to Babak’s rule in Azerbaijan, who was also betrayed by his former Armenian allies. During his supreme command in Azerbaijan and al-Armīniya in the years 835 to 839/840 CE, Ḥaydar ibn Kāwūs Afshīn al-Ustrushani appointed several commanders and governors from his retinue. Their nisbas give away their Central Asian origins, such as Muḥammad b. Sulaymān »al-Samarqandī«, Muḥammad b. Khālid »Bukhārākhudā« and Ḥaydar’s brother-in-law Mankjūr »al-Farghānī« (from the region of Fargāna to the east of Ustrushana, see fig. 2)³⁶.

Yet despite Ḥaydar’s success, the Abbasid Caliphs’ control over the South Caucasus region became increasingly fragile. In a last attempt to regain control in the South Caucasus, Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861 CE) in 852 CE sent the Turkish-born General Bugha »the Elder« with a strong army, including many mamluks from Central Asia. In his campaigns, Bugha devastated Armenia and Georgia and deported unruly Christian and Muslim princes to the Caliph’s new residence in Sāmarrā’ (north of Baghdad). The campaigns of Bugha, however, did not alter the fact that the central power in the Abbasid caliphate gradually lost control over its provinces, a process that accelerated after the assassination of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 861 CE³⁷. In the South Caucasus, there emerged a mosaic of regional rulers, including old-established Armenian and Georgian Christian princely houses such as the Bagratuni and the Arçruni as well as Muslim emirs of Arab, Iranian and Turkish or Kurdish origin. Ethnic and religious dividing lines were evoked in the ongoing competition for power and territory to legitimise violence just as much as they could be overcome in order to establish useful alliances. The mutual recognition not only as of equal rank but also to a certain extent as »similar« became visible in the use of mutually intelligible forms of representation of lordship and of other habits³⁸.

As Alison Vacca demonstrates in her most recent monograph, the »Sasanian legacy« provided one basis for a common ground of interaction and communication between Christian and Islamic elites in 9th to 10th century South Caucasia. In general, Vacca describes this period as an »Iranian Intermezzo« in the eastern lands of the Caliphate, charac-

terised by the rule of Iranian dynasties or of those claiming Iranian heritage, such as the Sāmānids in Khurāsān and Transoxania or the Būyids in western Iran and in Iraq³⁹. In the South Caucasus, she lists the Sājids (an »Arabized Iranian family of Central Asian origin«) in Azerbaijan, the »Kurdicized Arab Rawwādids« in the region of Tabrīz, the »Kurdish Marwānid family« in northern Mesopotamia and southern Armenia, the Kurdish Shaddādids (who claimed descent from the Sasanians) in the area of Ganjak and in eastern Armenia and the Sharwānshāhs (stemming from the »Persianized Arab Shaybānī tribe«) in the area of Derbent, who »took on the Sasanian title shah« and used personal names of the Sasanian tradition. Equally, Christian noble families (who actually could trace their origins back to the Sasanian period or even from before) »expressed their power by evoking Sasanian legacy (...). Both Armenian and Arabic sources from the tenth century refer to Bagratuni kings [of Armenia] as shāhanshāhs«⁴⁰.

The mobility between the edges of the (post)Sasanian world, its enduring »regime of entanglement« as illustrated in this paper without doubt had contributed to the emergence of such an »aristocratic koine«. As Joel T. Walker describes, this also included various narrative and visual models of elite culture: »From northern Arabia to the Caucasus, from Mesopotamia to Afghanistan, regional elites of the Sasanian Empire and its frontiers became familiar with epic traditions celebrating the kings and heroes of ancient Iran. By adopting Sasanian cultural and artistic models, provincial elites claimed these epic traditions as their own. Stories about Iranian kings on the hunt, on the polo field, and in battle provided a heroic ideal that could be translated into a wide range of narrative media. As a cultural language of power, Sasanian epic traditions endured long after the fall of Ctesiphon to the Arabs in 637«⁴¹.

In turn, the Caucasian region became an intermediary of such »Sasanian elements« towards Byzantium and the Central Asian »edge« towards Tibet or China. This equally opens a »global« perspective on the impact of Sasanian culture and the significance of the Sasanian sphere as a framework for the mobility and migration of people, objects and ideas⁴².

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36 de la Vaissière, Samarcande et Samarra 175-179. – Stark, Alttürkenzeit 252-253. – Crone, The nativist prophets 67-72. – Vacca, Non-Muslim Provinces 75.

37 al-Baladhuri 331-332. – K’art’līs C’xovreba 328. – Gordon 2001. – Preiser-Kapeller, Complex processes of migration.

38 Preiser-Kapeller, Complex processes of migration. – Jones, Between Islam and Byzantium.

39 Vacca, Non-Muslim Provinces 3-4. Cf. also Busse, Chalif und Grosskönig 131-188.

40 Vacca, Non-Muslim Provinces 3-8, 145. Cf. also Bosworth, Islamic dynasties 89-90. 140-142. 147. 150-152. – Ter-Ghewondyan, Arab Emirates.

41 Walker, The Legend of Mar Qardagh 122. Cf. also Preiser-Kapeller, Jenseits von Rom 64-66. – Jones, Between Islam and Byzantium.

42 Walker, The Emperor and the World. – Feltham, Lions, Silks and Silver. – Melikian-Chirvani, Iran to Tibet. – Green, Sasanian Finds. – Preiser-Kapeller, Jenseits von Rom.

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Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

Von einem Ende der (nach-)sasanidischen Welt zum anderen. Mobilität und Migration zwischen Kaukasus, Zentralasien und dem Persischen Golf vom 4.-9. Jahrhundert

Imperiale Räume wurden als »Verflechtungsregime« charakterisiert, in denen »bestimmte strukturelle und gewohnheitsmäßige Umstände (...) die Herstellung langfristiger Verbindungen zwischen Individuen und Orten aufgrund der Mobilität von Personen, Objekten und Ideen ermöglichen (Mulsow/Rübke 2013, 17; zitiert nach Schuppert, Verflochtene Staatlichkeit). Diese Regime haben auch nach dem Zerfall oder dem Zusammenbruch eines Imperiums dauerhafte Auswirkungen auf die Routen und Modi der Mobilität über größere Entfernungen.

Der vorliegende Beitrag präsentiert das Sasanidenreich als ein solches nachhaltiges »Regime der Verflechtungen«, auch für die ersten Jahrhunderte nach der Integration seiner Gebiete in das frühislamische Reich. Im Mittelpunkt stehen dabei drei »Ränder« – der Kaukasus, Zentralasien und der Persische Golf –, die sich an den Peripherien der (post) sasanidischen Welt befanden, jedoch zentral für den Austausch mit benachbarten Völkern und Kulturen waren. Wie demonstriert wird, bieten die Bewegungen und Migrationen zwischen und über diese Grenzen hinaus den Hintergrund für die Mobilität von Objekten und Elementen der sasanidischen Kunst und Kultur in ganz Afro-Eurasien im 1. Millennium n. Chr.

From one End of the (Post)Sasanian World to the Other. Mobility and Migration between the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf in the 4th to 9th Century CE

Imperial formations have been identified as »regimes of entanglements«, in which »certain structural and habitual circumstances (...) allow for the establishment of long term linkages« between individuals and places due to the mobility of people, object and ideas (Mulsow/Rübke 2013, 17; cited after Schuppert, Verflochtene Staatlichkeit). These regimes have an enduring impact on the routes and modes of mobility across larger distances even after the fragmentation or collapse of an empire.

This paper presents the Sasanian Empire as such a »regime of entanglement«, also for the first centuries after the integration of its territories in the Early Islamic Empire. The focus is on three »edges« – the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf – which were located at the peripheries of the (post) Sasanian World, but central for processes of exchange with neighbouring people and cultures. As is demonstrated, the movements and migrations between and across these edges provide also the background for the mobility of objects and elements of Sasanian art and culture across entire Afro-Eurasia and the 1st Millennium CE.

D'un bout à l'autre du monde sassanide. Mobilité et migration entre le Caucase, l'Asie centrale et le golfe Persique du 4^e au 9^e siècle

Les espaces impériaux furent souvent caractérisés comme des « régimes d'interdépendance » où certaines conditions structurelles et traditionnelles (...) favorisent la création de liens durables entre des individus et des lieux par la mobilité des personnes, des objets et des idées (Mulsow/Rübke 2013, 17; cité d'après Schuppert, Verflochtene Staatlichkeit). Ces régimes ont encore exercé une influence durable sur les voies d'échanges et les modes de déplacement sur de grandes distances après leur déclin ou leur effondrement. Cet article présente l'Empire sassanide comme un « régime d'interdépendance » stable, qui perdure encore les premiers siècles après l'intégration de ses territoires dans l'Empire proto-islamique. On met ici l'accent sur trois « zones » périphériques du monde (post-)sassanide – le Caucase, l'Asie centrale et le golfe Persique –, mais essentielles pour les échanges entre cultures et peuples voisins. Comme il est démontré ici, les déplacements et les migrations entre et au-delà des frontières livrent le contexte de la mobilité de certains objets et éléments de l'art et de la culture sassanides à travers toute l'Afro-Eurasie du premier millénaire ap. J.-C.

Traduction: Y. Gautier