

Rouben Galichian

COUNTRIES SOUTH OF THE CAUCASUS IN MEDIEVAL MAPS

Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan

Rouben Galichian's second volume on cartography is dedicated to the geography of countries located south of the Caucasus range of mountains, as depicted on medieval maps.

The third Millennium has already witnessed the steady eastward expansion of the borders of the European Union, which now includes many Eastern European, as well as some of the ex Soviet Union countries. Even Turkey, with over 97% of territory firmly rooted in what is geographically known as "Asia Minor", has aspirations of becoming part of this Union. Had it not been for some unresolved political issues, she might have already become a member state.

Thus, the borders of the European Union are being pushed further to the east and the Union is sharing common borders with countries whose history and geography remains obscure even to the well-educated class of Western Europeans. If, one day, Turkey succeeds in joining the Union, Europe, on its south-east, will share common borders with Syria, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.

The aim of the present work is to familiarize the reader with medieval historical cartography centering on the latter three of the above-mentioned countries; those situated south of the Caucasus range. In this volume the author has brought together various medieval manuscript maps from various libraries and museums. These rare maps act as a conduit to bring us the views of medieval historians and geographers.

The volume contains 82 medieval maps coming from the Latin Christian, Byzantine, Islamic, Syriac and Armenian traditions. These unique manuscripts constitute the main part of our medieval cartographic heritage. They have been studied and analysed in the present volume. Looking at the analysis of the area south of the Caucasus, one cannot help to notice how the external social, economic and political forces have influenced the area, generally concluding the following.



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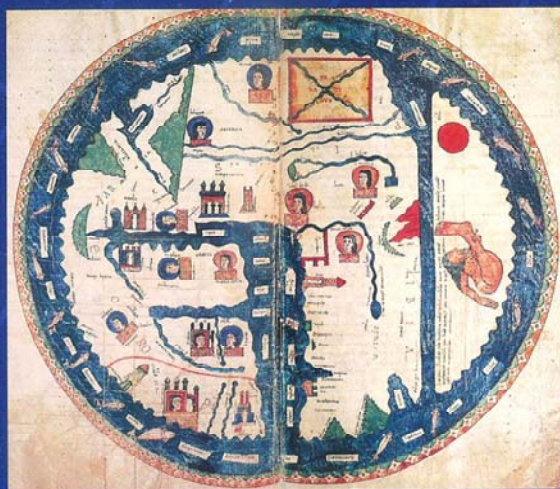
1. Georgia's constituent territories, whose predecessors were Colchis-Imeretia-Abkhazia, Kartli-Iberia and Mingrelia, existed since before our Common Era and during the eleventh to twelfth centuries the union of these territories created what we know today as the Republic of Georgia. The name Georgia appeared on the maps of the thirteenth century. This country now occupies more or less the same territory, which it did during the middle ages.
2. In the medieval times the territory of today's Republic of Azerbaijan was entitled [Caucasian] Albania, a Christian country, which disappeared during the ninth to tenth centuries and the territory was later divided into various provinces and Khanates of Daghestan, Derbend, Shirwan, Shamakhi, Talish etc. As a result of political scheming, the name "Azerbaijan", which, for over two millennia belonged to the North-western Iranian province across the river Arax, was given to this territory only in 1918. Today's Republic of Azerbaijan occupies the territory of Albania, as well as some additional neighbouring areas.
3. The geographical location of Armenia has always been shown as being south of Georgia and Albania, extending across the Arax River south-westward, past lake Van, as far as the Armenian Plateau or Highland extends. This is where the indigenous Armenians lived from the first millennium BCE until 1915. Armenia lost its independence in the eleventh century and Western Armenia was successively ruled by the Seljuks, Mongols and Ottomans, who in 1915 ethnically cleansed the territory of its indigenous people, the Armenians. The result was an Armenia, which for millennia occupied the territory of the Armenian Plateau, is now wedged between Iran, Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan, occupying only about ten percent of the territories of historic Armenia.

The book has about 220 pages, containing 82 map reproductions and 24 details, of which 98 are in full colour. Detailed texts and various tables of toponyms accompany each map.

The book is co-published by Printinfo Art Books of Yerevan & Gomidas Institute of London.

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The World Map of Beatus of Liebana, 8-th century.