



**Silk Road in the aftermath of Arab conquest: Trade routes
traversing Azerbaijan**

Farda Asadov, Ph.D.

Head of the Department of the History of Arab countries
Institute of Oriental Studies after Z.M. Bunyadov
National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan
+(994) 50 212 65 19. asadovfm@hotmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9034-0011

Abstract

The article summarizes the outcomes of the clash between Khazar Turks and Muslim Arabs in wars for the South Caucasus. More than hundred years of permanent military struggle stabilized the border along Great Caucasus Range and inevitably resulted in a search for partnership options to resume mutually advantageous long-distance trade on Silk Roads. Located on the northern littoral lands of the Caspian the Khazar khaganate occupied important space on the juncture of nomadic Eurasian steppes and lands populated by various northern peoples, Finno-Ugrian and Slavic tribes. Starting from the end of VIII century Scandinavian merchants and warriors emerged in the region claiming for their share in international trade by swords and loads of commercial goods. The article describes the system of trade communications and control established by Khazar khaganate involving various nations to Silk Road trade, as well as analyses magisterial trade routes of the time of Arab-Khazar partnership in trade. Tracking of trade flows and description of trade structure and commodities allow to conclude that magisterial trade routes went

traversing the territories of Arran (modern Azerbaijan republic) and the province of Azerbaijan in the north of contemporary Iran. Consequently, the gradual economic interconnection, human mobility, rise of local production to serve the interests of long-distance trade and to provide local commodities demanded in the markets of Silk Road geography, generated a start of gradual economic and cultural convergence between two regions of international trade transit of the time considered herein in the publication.

Keywords: Arabs; Arran; Azerbaijan; Khazar Turks; Scandinavian merchants in the East; Silk Road.

Arab conquest and reinstatement of Silk Road trade operations.

In antiquity and the Middle Ages, wars and conquests occurred to seize lands for the subsequent subtraction of part of the production through taxes, in case of establishing direct control over the captured land; or to obtain tribute, when the previous structures of political power remained intact in the conquered lands. Wars for control of international trade routes also promised benefits to conquerors, since direct control gave the right to collect trade duties. If it was impossible to directly rule the territories of trade routes, partnerships with neighbouring countries guaranteed the unhindered passage of caravans and the uninterrupted supply of goods to large markets, the activities of which also brought great profits to the state. Naturally, during the period of military confrontation, trade operations were reduced or stopped, as well as profits from trade were reduced. Thus, every war over trade routes sooner or later ended in peace and the resumption of trade operations.

On the eve of the Arab conquests, trade routes through the Eurasian steppes connecting the Far East and Europe were under the control of the Turkic Khaganate, one of the biggest ever empires established by Eurasian nomads in history (552-658). At the end of the 6th and beginning of the 7th centuries, there were two main branches of the route from China to Europe. The southern route led west through

territories subject to Sasanian Iran, to Asia Minor and Byzantium and further to Western Europe. The northern route went through the Caspian and Black Sea steppes to the north-eastern and northern frontiers of Byzantium in the Crimea and the Balkans.

The ruling Ashina dynasty and the entire nomadic elite of the Turkic Khaganate, and Sogdian merchant corporation, which used to maintain trade operations along traditional trade tracks, established mutually beneficial partnership for maintenance of lucrative silk trade. The Sogdians were eager to sell locally produced silk fabrics, and their interests coincided with those of the Turks who had accumulated a lot of Chinese silk, owned as a result of unequal cross-border trade exchanges on the Chinese border (R.K. Kovalev, 2005:60). A Sogdian merchant Maniah was authorized by Istemi-khagan, the ruler of the Western part of the khaganate (552-576), to hold talks with Persia and Byzantium. He went to Persia with a first shipment of goods (in 566). Sassanid Shahinshah Khosrov Anushirvan paid for the silk but immediately ordered the goods Maniah had brought to be burned in front of the Turkic envoys. For security reasons Persia wanted neither silk nor foreign merchants to reach the state. Iran and Byzantium were confronting in Minor Asia and their struggle was also shaped as a clash of two religions and ideologies that of Christianity and Zoroastrianism. The mission to Byzantium one year later was more successful: the Byzantines and Turks reached agreement based on their mutual economic interests and political disputes with Persia. A trade accord was also followed by military alliance against Persia (Менандр, 1860: 373, 379).

The Western Turkic Khaganate continued in organising international trade in alliance with Byzantium, and was a reliable ally in the latter's military confrontation with Persia. The alliance was most striking in the course of the Persian-Byzantine war in the Caucasus of 625-627, a war designated by L.N. Gumilyov as the World War of the 7th century (Гумилев, 1993:193). During hostilities, the khaganate's principal forces were the Caucasian Turks who began to consolidate into a new political force known as the Khazars. The Western Turkic Khaganate fell in the mid-7th century as a result of internal discord,

enmity with the Eastern Khaganate, and expansion by Tang China. The western, Caucasian Turks – the Khazars – managed to establish their own state that for the next three centuries succeeded in competing with the region's principal powers in a struggle for control of the western sector of the Silk Road's Eurasian routes.

The establishment of the Khazar Khaganate coincided with the appearance of the Arab Caliphate which, after its crushing defeat of the Sassanid Army in the Battle of Nehavend in 642, began to extend its borders northwards and eastwards. The Arabs completely replaced the previous Sassanid administration in provinces and even managed to spread beyond the limits of Sassanid political authority. The 8th century saw stubborn hostilities between the Arabs and the Central Asian Turks, where, after the collapse of the Western Turkic Khaganate, Turkic tribal leaders competed with one another but supported Sogdian trade cities in opposing the Arab invasion (Бартольд, 1963: 121, 163-64, 229-30).

In the north, the Arabs' advance through the South Caucasus faced the furious and well-organized opposition of the Khazars. The struggle against a strong centralized Khazar Khaganate was long and tense. A fierce confrontation from the moment clashes began until the end of the 8th century led to a military-political balance and peace in which the former rivals and enemies became, one may say, good partners in profitable international trade along the Silk Road. Stability and huge trade revenues made the Khazar Khaganate a mighty state that held its southern borders with Byzantium and the Caliphate stable for nearly three centuries, preventing the nomads from raiding the lands of their southern neighbours. Three superpowers for some time delimited their spheres of influence in Eurasia and the Near East: the Muslim Caliphate, the Christian Byzantium and the Khazar Khaganate. As for the latter, the Khazar political elite went on to convert from the traditional Turkic faith in Tengri to Judaism, apparently at the end of the 8th century.

For the Arab Caliphate, this period was the golden age of Harun al-Rashid (763-809). The Islamic state was as powerful as never before

under the Caliph of Baghdad. It was the time to establish peace with the political forces on long distance trade routes, to ensure smooth functioning of the Silk Road trade. Early in the 9th century, Arab *ghazi* (faith warrior) Tamim ibn Bahr al-Mutawwi'i changed his armour for ambassadorial dress and went to the capital of the Uyghur Khaganate on the Orkhon River. In all likelihood, his mission was to achieve political guarantees for the safe passage of trade caravans from the Caspian coast to the Chinese border. The dating of Tamim ibn Bahr's journey is another matter under discussion in the chronology of developments of that period. Different opinions have his mission taking place at times ranging from 752 to 822. The differences in dating are not crucial to establishing the fact of a policy change towards peaceful trading relations with mighty rulers of the Turkic steppe. Nevertheless, the dating we suggest is that that the journey took place prior to 808. This puts Tamim's mission back into the final years of Harun al-Rashid's rule (Асадов, 1993:31-33).

Main routes through the Caucasus and Azerbaijan under Arab rule

In the western sector of the Eurasian trade area, the new political situation forced a search for new trade routes. The path through former Sassanid possessions on the way from China to eastern and western Europe, over which the Arabs established control in the second half of the 7th century, was unpromising for Muslim merchants due to the hostility between the Caliphate and Byzantium. Then the Eurasian steppe became a transit territory for trade with western Europe. This is why the Caliphate's efforts turned to establishing peaceful relations with nations and states in areas where attempts to take control of trade routes by force had failed. The mighty Khazar state now became a useful partner because it provided safe passage for caravans over lands it controlled, albeit settled by various peoples. So, Harun al-Rashid concluded a treaty of peace and alliance with the Khazars (З. Буниятов, 1965:115).

Information in various sources leads us to believe that at this period the Khazars were able to create and lead trade and political alliances that ensured the transportation of commodities in two main

directions. The first direction was a route from Khorezm via the medium and lower reaches of Volga River to the Dnieper and onward to western Europe. The initial sections of this route had been established in the middle of the 6th century by Sogdian merchants, as noted above. This northern route had two principal branches, one of which led to Byzantium across Khazar possessions in the Caucasus and Crimea; the other one – via Eastern Europe to the Frankish State.

The second direction used by the Khazar Khaganate ensured an outlet to Caliphate markets for commodities from the Khazar Khaganate and other northern nations. This was a southward route through the South Caucasus. Again, this route became necessary due to the changed structure of international trade. As described above, the Near and Middle East was no longer in urgent need of Chinese silk since the late Sassanid period. In the Muslim era, silk production was well-organized practically throughout the climatic cultivation zone of mulberry trees: in Iran and in both northern (Arran) and southern Azerbaijan.

However, there was increased demand from Near and Middle Eastern markets of the Muslim world for raw materials, locally produced goods, furs and slaves from the non-Muslim states of Central Eurasia north of the Caucasus Mountains. The existence of the strong Khazar Khaganate able to organise the collection of those goods for trading was the most important factor in meeting the demand for the North's goods in the international markets. The alliance between the Arabs and the Khazars was the main difference from the late Sassanid era, for the Turkic Khaganate resolved the problem of promoting Chinese silk to the market avoiding Iran, while the Khazar Khaganate opened the way for the products of dependent Eurasian lands, and partially for transit transportation of Far Eastern commodities, among which Chinese silk had fallen far down the list by the mid 9th century, to the Near Eastern markets. This may be understood from a reading of reports by Arab authors of the 9th and 10th centuries. Al-Istakhri reported that Khazar merchants traded in imported silk and furs; however, al-Jahiz made no mention of silk among goods typical of the

Khazar Khaganate (Al-Istakhri, 1961: 131; (Al-Djahiz, 1932:342). The Chinese Silk ceased to be a dominating demand in international trade with Near East by the time of Arab conquest. However, Khazars continued re-exporting it to the Western markets. The silk trade continued, and provinces of Middle East and Transcaucasia were then silk exporting countries rather than importing.

Heading in the opposite direction were Near Eastern commodities, primarily the silver Abbasid coin that was in great demand by northern nations who had no mint of their own, but were forced to pay some part of Khazar taxes in cash (R.K. Kovalev, 2005: 80). This route was not quite a new direction for traders and commodities; however, this route was almost inoperative in the late Sassanid period, because of the hostile relations between the Western Turkic Khaganate and Persia. It should be borne in mind that there were two principal routes towards the south across the Caucasian range. One of them was the so-called Darial Gorge, known as the “Alan Gate” in ancient times. As its name implies, this pass was on land occupied by the Iranian-speaking Alans, who are believed to be the ancestors of the present-day Ossetians. The other route was the famous Derbent Pass along the western coast of the Caspian. The strengthening of these two passes was always an important factor in superpower interrelations.

Initial fortification works in the western Caspian littoral routes were carried out by the Sassanids during Shahinshah Yazdegerd II's (438-457) rule (Minorsky & Munajjim Bashi, 1958:87, note 2). Both passes were called “Caspian Gates”; however, it was more often applied to the Derbent Pass. This was geographically appropriate, for the Derbent wall actually went into the Caspian Sea. But giving the Darial Gorge a “Caspian” name could not have been a mere error, or confusion resulting from ancient writers' inability to distinguish it from the Derbent gates. There is a view that the Darial Gorge could have been called the “Caspian Gates” in antiquity. In particular, Josephus Flavius and Cornelius Tacitus could have named it so after the Caspians, a people whose habitat stretched from the Caspian shore to the central part of the North Caucasus Ridge; and only by the early med-

ieval period was it reduced to the coastal provinces of the southern Caspian region (Меликов, 2009:71)

A. K. Alikberov pointed to another interesting detail, found in the “Derbent-name”, a local source from the late 16th century that has survived in Azerbaijani Turkic, Persian and Arabic. One manuscript in the Azerbaijani Turkic version reports that the ruler Isfandiyar, a son of Gushtasp (the latter is traditionally identified as Parthian king Vologases I (51-78 CE) restored a wall called “Alan” and extended it to the sea. Proceeding from the fact that the Persian text refers to the above-mentioned gates as “Dar-i Al” (not Al-an), i.e. in singular form, Alikberov believed that this contradicts the Persian tradition for ethnonyms to be in plural form and hence he concluded that the “Derbent-name” was not referring to the Alan Gates or the Darial Gorge, but to another construction. In his opinion, the book was describing a fortification in Shirvan, where the existence of early fortifications has been confirmed by archaeological evidence. The researcher connected the location of the Alan Gates to the issue of the possessions of a local ruler of Mughan (or southern Shirvan) described by Arab sources as having the title “Alan-shah”. Considering the opinion of another Daghestani archaeologist, M. S. Gadjiyev, that “Alan-shah” probably meant ‘Arran-shah’ (i.e. the ruler of Arran, a central area of present-day Azerbaijan that included parts of Shirvan and Mughan), Alikberov proposed that the *Alan* (Arran) Gates might have reached the Caspian but were fortifications on western Caspian lands south of Derbent. And, only later, information about these gates and their connection with the Caspian, was transferred to a mountainous pass in the Central Caucasus due to the term’s consonance with the name of the Alan people (Аликберов, 2003:83-84).

A southward route from the Eurasian steppes was of particular significance for two most important trade operations. Firstly, it was used as an alternative route to transit commodities from China via Central Asia to Iran. Secondly, it was used to deliver commodities from the Caucasus and countries north of the Caucasus Mountains (under the political sway of the Khazar Khaganate from the 8th - 10th

centuries) to Near Eastern markets. Another no less important factor of the north-south route was an increase of demand for goods from the northern nations – furs, slaves, wax and craft items.

Contacts between the settled population and northern nomads were more intensive in Caucasian Albania (modern Azerbaijan) than in any other part of the South Caucasus. Settling in Caucasian Albania, nomads used the land for their habitual cattle-breeding, as may be concluded from Strabo's report that: "Albanians are largely engaged in cattle-breeding and they are most likely nomads; however, they are not wild and hence, not too belligerent" (Страбон, 2004:103).

Armenian sources left evidence that the lands north of the River Kura had been a land of nomads before the Arabs appeared in this area (Sebeos, 1999:32; (Sebeos, 1985:47; Ф. Асадов, 2016:29-43). Arab authors confirm this in quoting their forerunner Sassanid informants. The Arab historian al-Baladhuri reports that, prior to the rule of Khosrov Anushirvan (531-579), Arran (Caucasian Albania) and Jurzan (Georgia) were subject to the Khazars, and Armenia to Byzantium. Moreover, the Khazars regularly raided the south as far as the Sassanid fortress of Dinavar, whose ruins are located north of the current city of Kermanshah in Western Iran. Gabala, the capital of ancient Caucasian Albania, was a Khazar administrative centre (al-Beladsori, 1866:194-195). In Arab sources, "Azerbaijan" usually referred to modern southern Azerbaijan, now part of Iran. The lands of the modern Republic of Azerbaijan, north of the Iranian border, were usually called "Arran" and included the lands up to Derbent and bordering to Tiflis. The toponyms Shirvan (central-eastern part of modern Azerbaijan) and Jurzan (conditionally: north-western Azerbaijan and eastern Georgia) were also used.

Having subjugated practically all the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the Western Eurasian steppe by the mid-7th century, the Khazars pushed further southward along the traditional caravan routes, primarily, along the western Caspian shoreline. In Derbent, they maintained a permanent garrison for at least a century (Буниятов, 1961: 25-27; Ф. М. Асадов, 2015: 29-31).

Unlike the superpowers, the population and political elite of the buffer zone – and Caucasian Albania may be considered as such – were politically or economically keen to maintain peaceful relations and trade and economic cooperation with their nomad neighbours. An alliance with them helped in their aspirations for political independence and in profiting from international trade. The nature of the partnerships formed along the trade route largely determined the possibilities and main elements of cultural interaction between nations. Caucasian Albania's nobility and royal authority often encouraged nomads residing behind the Derbent fortifications to support their aspiration for independence from the great empires, especially from Sassanid Persia. This happened, for example, during the major anti-Sassanid rebellion in Albania led by King Vache II from 459-462, following the end of the reign of Yazdegerd II (439-457), who was known for erecting the first fortifications at the Derbent Pass. The Albanian king levelled those fortifications to the ground, in order to unite with his *Mascut* allies (Мамедова, 2005:354)

The appearance of a new political force – the victorious Arab Muslims – was equally alarming for Albania's settled and semi-nomadic populations and the Caucasian nomads – the Khazars. The Arabs reached the Khazar border quite swiftly. This does not mean that the Albanians welcomed the invaders. It is more likely that there was a plan to draw them to the foothills and mountains of the Caucasus, where the Khazars met them with their usual belligerence. Wars between Khazars and Arabs continued for more than one hundred years. After a decisive inroad by future to be caliph Marvan ibn Muhammad in 737 the battlefield of the South Caucasus was left for Arabs. The Derbent city having had moved from hands to hands several times finally ended up as frontier city within borders of Muslim state and a first Mosque in the South Caucasus was said to have been constructed as early as in 732 by victorious commander Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik (Brook, 2006:180).

International trade was undoubtedly a factor influencing the development of relations between Khazars and Arabs. The desire to

control trade routes and secure the transportation of commodities across vast territories inhabited by a variety of nations and tribes encouraged the creation of large nomadic empires in which the nomads integrated with settled communities of farmers (Крадин, 2000:329). These empires were an important guarantor of the trade routes, security of commodities and the safety of merchants who undertook months-long treks across steppe inhabited by warlike tribes. The tribal confederation of Khazars developed in the same manner.

The Khazar Khaganate controlled the most important stations along the Silk Road for three centuries from the mid-7th century. Such advantageous standing and strength made the Khazars a promising partner for Arab caliphate in reinstatement of mutually lucrative long distance international trade. The khaganate was most likely very successful in profiting as a transit country with vast subordinate territories. It was also able to collect the production of its tributaries, including eastern Slavonic people for the sake of trade. However, starting from the end of 8th century they used to face a powerful factor of militarily strong and highly motivated gild of Scandinavian merchant and warriors who were named *Varangians* in Byzantine sources and *Rus* in Arab sources

In a letter to Hasdai ibn Shaprut, a high dignitary of Cordoban Caliph Abd ar-Rahman III (929-961), a Khazar king wrote that he lived on the bank of a river where it fell into the Caspian Sea, and did not allow Varangians who arrived by ships to raid Muslim estates, nor did he let other enemies of Muslims enter the area by either sea or land (Kokovtsov, 1932:83-84). There is every reason to believe that, after a century and a half of open confrontation, the Khazars and the Arabs reached a peace under which the Khazar State controlled Varangian raiders, as well as Turkic nomads on the western and eastern shorelines of the Caspian Sea, and they safeguarded Muslim territory and possessions against their raids.

In the period reviewed, trade routes ran from Near Eastern centres via the Caucasus to the Lower Volga and onward to the Khazar fortress of Sarkel where the Volga and Don Rivers were closest. The

route went further northwards along the Don River to the northern Donets, the basin of the Oka River, the upper reaches of the Dnieper, or via the western Dvina to the Baltic Sea. That was the path taken by Muslim dirhams to the north of present-day Russia and Scandinavia (Roman K. Kovalev & Kaelin, 2007:569) via the territory of present-day Azerbaijan, being a borderland between Muslim possessions and nomads' lands.

There can be no doubt that these routes were secured by the political authority of the Khazar Khaganate, while the city of Sarkel was a key hub for the convergence of various routes that had been made possible by cooperation in trade between the Arabs and the Khazars in the 8th and 9th centuries. Having established a certain balance of forces and trade partnership with the Arab Caliphate in the South Caucasus, the Khazars advanced westward and north-westward, effectively responding to consumer demand for furs, slaves, wax, musk, fish glue and other products of the northern nations. The Rus were probably the collectors and suppliers of those goods, however, the Khazars controlled access to the markets.

Ibn Khordadbeh refers to the Rus merchants as people belonging to *saklabs*. The latter ethnic term of Arabic sources refers to various peoples north of the Caucasus. Most often, it meant the Slavs, since the word itself is thought to originate from "sklavin" (Slav). However, quite often, it denoted northern peoples of unknown origin, or it was a racial term. It could apply to Finno-Ugric or Turkic people. Ibn Fadlan, for example, called Volga Bulgars "Saklabs". He adds that they traded furs and swords they brought from remote parts of "saklab" country to the *Rum Sea* (Black Sea). In so doing, they paid duties to the Byzantines; they could also transport goods up the Don River to the Khazar city of Khamlidj (presumably residence of the Khazar ruler in the capital city Ityl), where they paid tithes to the Khazar khagan and from there went down the Caspian to the southern coast. There they unloaded their goods, put them on camels and took them to Baghdad (Ibn Khordadbeh, 1967:154). Ibn Khordadbeh's story about trans-Caspian trade by the Rus is supplemented by impo-

rtant details, including indications of the direct, non-stop transportation of goods from ports in the South Caspian, Gorgan, to the Khazar capital – Ityl – within 8 days in a favourable wind (Ibn Khordadbeh, 1967:124).

Commodities from Ityl could take an alternative land route along the western coast through the territory of modern Azerbaijan. The route was probably controlled by Muslim merchants, both locals from Khazaria and Azerbaijan and experienced traders from the central provinces of the Caliphate. The frequently cited Ibn Khordadbeh, used words by his 9th century poet friend, al-Buhturi, to confirm that merchants concluding trade agreements in the Khazar capital, enjoyed special respect in Iraq (Ibn Khordadbeh, 1967:124)

There were different factors to be taken into account when deciding on which route to send one's goods from Khazar Ityl. This included convenience of transport, the costs involved, security, as well as the best option for sales of goods on their way to the final destination, in this case from Ityl to the central regions of the Caliphate. For the Caspian section – from north to south and back – we might suppose that the sea route would have been cheaper than land transportation, although we do not know how much the Rus charged for freight. However, we do know that it took eight days to get from Ityl to Abaskun by sea (Ibn al-Faqih, 1885:298). This was shorter than the land route, and there was no need for lodging at intermediary stations and trade centres. When on board the Rus ships, commodities and their owners were under the control of a well-armed crew prone to violence and robbery. But it is true that the Rus ships were, in turn, controlled by the Khazar authorities. Anyone infringing a trade contract was accountable to the mechanisms set up by the Khazars, who were responsible for the state policy of the Khazar Khaganate. This policy brought in great profits from trade, and the security of that trade was in the Khazars interests. We can judge on the matter from the evidence of the existence of judicial bodies with authority to watch over the various communities and merchants in Ityl. All complaints

and problems were reported to the ruler who apparently supervised the courts personally (Ibn Haukal, 1967:290).

The main highway that led from Baghdad to the South Caucasus was the Khorasan route that began at the Khorasan gates of the Abbasid capital (Le Strange, 1905:32). The branches from the Khorasan Road towards Azerbaijan were at the famous Behistun rock to the south-west of Ecbatana, ancient capital of Media, near today's Hamadan (Vəlixanlı, 2016:468). One direction led to Dinavar, near modern town Sahne in western Iran, and then to Zanjan, Maragha, Mianeh and Ardebil. Another route led to Varsan, a city of Arran on the Araz River (Ibn Khordadbeh, 1967:119). A third route went from Dinavar towards Arran: first to the small city of Sisara, 20 farsakhs from Maragha and then to Beylagan (Ibn Khordadbeh, 1967:120). One can notice that some localities in southern Azerbaijan but bordering Arran had similar names to cities in northern Azerbaijan. These similarities suggest a closeness of trade and economic relations between these two regions in the Caliphate period. The populations of these cities were probably homogeneous ethnically, culturally and economically. The duplication of names was due to resettlements from one region to another (Vəlixanlı, 2016:468). The Beylagan mentioned here was a small city between Dinavar and Maragha. Ibn Khordadbeh mentioned different routes, most of them of local importance and usable in favourable seasons only: there were winter and summer routes (Ibn Khordadbeh, 1967:295).

Conclusions

The reports from Arab sources briefly cited above allow the conclusion that trade with Khazaria and through Khazaria by the trans-Caspian Sea routes and roads of Arran and Azerbaijan proved to be the key directions of international trade transporting the goods to Near Eastern markets in the 9th - first half of the 10th centuries.

The ports of Derbent and Baku were linked to the southern Caspian ports of Jurjan and Tabaristan. From there trade routes continued to the Middle East and India. A maritime route undoubtedly existed across the Caspian to the Mangyshlak Peninsula where evide-

nce suggests there was a settlement of Oghuz in the first half of the 10th century. They were separated from the main body of their tribe still under Khazar rule. That coastline, however, was not easy for shipping – the sea was either too shallow or there were underwater rocks that hampered manoeuvres. Ibn Hawqal warned about the danger of shipwreck there and the loss of cargo, for the Turks would take it (Ibn Haukal, 1967:330).

The land routes through Azerbaijan led westward to Tiflis, south-westward to Dabil, and southward to Ardebil, and local people were active in the profitable transit trade too. Long caravan treks were wearing and it was extremely difficult for the original owner of a commodity to cover the whole road from the Near East to China and India. The province of Arran, or present-day Azerbaijan located between the Khazar khaganate and the Muslim Near East was staged as a bridging land with well-developed local production and services to meet the needs of the caravan traders. It is not surprising that writers of the first half of the 10th century were unanimous in asserting that the cities of Arran were very pleasant and provided all the conveniences. Many consumer goods were produced in the country, including fruits and vegetables, livestock, linen, silk and cotton clothing. Barda, for example, was noted for the number of inns and bathhouses (Ibn Haukal, 1967:190).

Large wholesale bazaars were located in Arran and southern Azerbaijan. We know the names of two of them – al-Kurki in Barda, and Kursere near Maragha. Large consignments of commodities could change hands there, and tired merchants could then return home. It was an important development that practically the whole of northern Azerbaijan, the former Caucasian Albania, began consolidating into a common economic space with southern province Azerbaijan, former Medes, characterized with interconnected production resources, domestic market and infrastructure for international trade.

Works Cited

- al-Beladsori, Imamo Ahmed ibn Yahja ibn Djabir. (1866). *Liber expugnationis regionum* (M. J. d. Goeje Ed.). Lugduni Batavorum: E.J. Brill.
- Al-Djahiz, Abu Uthman Amr ibn Bahr. (1932). At-Tabassur bi at-Tidjara. *Revue de l'Academie Arabe de Damas*, XII, 326-351.
- Al-Istakhri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Muhammad al-Farisi al-ma'ruf bi al-Karkhi. (1961). *Al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik*. al-Kahira: Wizarat as-saqafa wa al-irshad al-qaumi.
- Brook, Kevin Alan. (2006). *The Jews of Khazaria* (2nd ed.). Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ibn al-Faqih, Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Hamadhani. (1885). *Compendium libri kitab al-boldan: auctore Ibn al-Fakih al-Hamadhani, quod edidit, indicibus et glossario instruxit M. J. de Goeje* (M. J. d. Goeje Ed.). Lugduni-Batavorum: E. J. Brill.
- Ibn Haukal, Abu al-Kasim (1967). *Liber Imaginis Terrae (Kitab surat al-ard)* (J. H. Kramers Ed. editio tertia (photomechanice iterata) ed.). Lugduni Batavorum: E.J.Brill.
- Ibn Khordadbeh, Abu al-Kasim Ubaydallah Ibn Abdallah. (1967). *Kitab al-Masalik wa'l-Mamalik* (M. J. d. Goeje Ed. editio secunda (photomechanice iterata) ed.). Lugduni Batavorum: E.J. Brill.
- Kovalev, R.K. (2005). Commerce and Caravan Routes Along Northern Silk Roads (sixth-ninth centuries). Part I: The Western Sector. *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 14, 55-105.
- Kovalev, Roman K., & Kaelin, Alexis C. (2007). Circulation of Arab Silver in Medieval Afro-Eurasia: Preliminary Observations. *History Compass*, 5(2), 560-580.doi:10.1111/j.1478-0542.2006.00376.x.
- Le Strange, G. (1905). *The lands of the eastern caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia from the Moslem conquest to the time of Timur*. New York: Barnes & Noble.

- Minorsky, Vladimir, & Munajjim Bashi, Ahmad ibn Lutf Allah. (1958). *A history of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th-11th centuries*. Cambridge: Heffer.
- Sebeos. (1985). *History* (R. Bedrosian, Trans.). New York.
- Sebeos. (1999). *The Armenian history attributed to Sebeos* (R. W. Thomson. Historical commentary by Tim Greenwood with the assistance by James Howard-Johnston, Trans.). Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Vəlixanlı, Nailə. (2016). *Azərbaycan VII-XII əsrlərdə: tarix, mənbələr, şərhlər*. Bakı: Elm və təhsil.
- Alikberov, A.K. (2003). The era of classical Islam in the Caucasus. Abu Bakr ad-Darbandi and his Sufi encyclopedia "Raikhan al-hakaiq" (XI-XII centuries) (S. M. Prozorov Ed.). Moscow: "Oriental Literature" RAS.
- Asadov, F.M. (1993). Arabic sources about the Turks in the early Middle Ages. Baku: Elm.
- Asadov, F.M. (2015). Controversy about the duration of the Khazars' dominance in the South Caucasus in Khazar studies of the second half of the twentieth century. In Sh. M. Mustafaev (Ed.), *The Medieval East: Problems of Historiography and Source Studies* (pp. 16-35). Baku: "Elm".
- Asadov, Farda. (2016). Turkic population of Caucasian Albania in the Sasanian period (V – VII centuries). *Transcaucasica* (3), 29-43.
- Bartold, V.V. (1963). Turkestan during the era of the Mongol invasion. In I.P.Petrushevsky (Ed.), *V.V.Bartold. Essays. T. I. (Vol. I, pp. 45-601)*. Moscow: Publishing House of Eastern Literature.
- Buniyatov, Z.M. (1961). About the duration of the Khazars' stay in Albania in the 7th-8th centuries. *News of the Academy of Sciences of the Az. SSR, Series of social sciences* (No. 1), pp. 22-34.
- Buniyatov, Ziya. (1965). *Azerbaijan in the 7th – 9th centuries*. Baku: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR.

- Gumilev, L.N. (1993). *Ancient Turks*. Moscow: "Klyshnikov-Komarov and Co."
- Kradin, N. N. (2000). Nomads, world-empires and social evolution. In A. V. K. N.N. Kradin, D.M. Bondarenko, V.A. Lynsha. (Ed.), *Alternative Paths to Civilization* (pp. 314-335). Moscow: Logos. Retrieved from <http://abuss.narod.ru/Biblio/AlterCiv/kradin.htm>.
- Mamedova, Farida. (2005). *Caucasian Albania and Albanians*. Baku: Center for Studies of Caucasian Albania.
- Melikov, Rauf. (2009). Participation of ancient Albania in international trade In Sh. M. M. S.G. Klyashtorny (Ed.), "Strabo's Road" as part of the Great Silk Road: Proceedings of the international conference (Baku, November 28-29, 2008) (pp. 67-80). Samarkand-Tashkent: SMI-ASIA.
- Menander. (1860). *Menander the Byzantine is a continuation of the story of Agafieva*. Byzantine historians: Dexippus, Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Malchus, Peter the Patrician, Menander, Candida, Nonnos and Theophanes the Byzantine translated from the Greek by Spyridon Destunis (pp. 311-470). Saint Petersburg. Retrieved from http://krotov.info/acts/05/marsel/ist_viz_06.htm.
- Strabo. (2004). *Geography in seventeen books* (Translation from Greek, introductory article and comments by G.A. Stratanovsky). Moscow: OLMA-PRESS.