

Abkhazia and the Arab Caliphate in the First Half of the 8th Century

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Having emerged as a result of the Muslim conquests in the 7th-9th centuries as an Arab theocratic state of an early feudal type, the Arab Caliphate surpassed the Roman Empire in size, incorporating significant territories through victorious wars. It 'began military operations beyond Arabia in the 630s, and in the same century seized Syria, Palestine, Egypt and other eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire, subjugated Iran, and invaded North Africa, Transcaucasia and Central Asia. Within a century, it had conquered a vast territory, nominally stretching from the Atlantic Ocean and the borders of Southern France in the west to India and Western China in the east'.¹ The ideology of the Arab Caliphate was Islam. In the Middle Ages, the very word 'Arabs' meant 'Muslims'. 'All of them, at once, with a single word. It made no difference whether the peoples of Arabia, Egypt or Syria were in question. A Muslim, therefore, an Arab. Dozens of peoples became Arabs overnight'.²

As for the understanding of the course of the Arab conquest and its consequences in the Eastern Black Sea region (in Transcaucasia), including the territory of modern Abkhazia, it is based primarily on written sources from the end of the 7th century (Theophanes the Chronicler, Abu'l-Abbas al-Baladhuri, al-Tabari, Movses Kaghankatvatsi, and others). It is at this time that the famous Tsebelda archaeological culture ceases to be recorded, judging by the absence of Apsilian material at the end of the 7th century. In this regard, Yu. N. Voronov, relying on an analysis of the relevant written sources, suggested that 'the main role in the demise of the Tsebelda culture must have been played by the Arab invasion',³ which is somewhat doubtful.⁴ It is precisely this period that emerges most clearly as the beginning of the spread of the Caliphate's influence into the Western Caucasus, which continued until the end of the 8th century.

Early Conflicts and Byzantine Response

Meanwhile, the first battle between the Abkhazians and the Arabs took place far beyond the borders of Abkhazia as early as the mid-7th century on Armenian soil, when, by order of Caliph Uthman, the Arab commander Habib ibn Maslama invaded Armenia with a large army. The Arab historian Al-Baladhuri, one of the first Islamic historians of the 9th century, notes in his work *The Book of the Conquests of Lands (Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān)* that the Arabs unexpectedly encountered Armenian allies there: 'auxiliary detachments' of Abkhazians,

Alans, and Khazars, invited by the patrician of Armeniacus.⁵ Subsequently, the Abkhazians were already fighting the Arabs on their own territory, repelling them.

As is known, in the last years of the reign of Emperor Heraclius, the Byzantine Empire suffered a series of defeats in its struggle with the Arabs and lost Syria and Palestine. In the early 640s, Iran fell, after which the path for the Arabs into Transcaucasia was open. Their penetration occurred at the expense of displacing the Byzantine Empire's influence in the region. The first country to feel the blow was Armenia. In 640, the Arabs invaded Armenia and took its capital, Dvin. Seeking to establish themselves there, the Arabs undertook a series of campaigns into Asia Minor. They fortified themselves in the region of Melitene, in the border zone west of the central Armenian lands, and from there launched strikes against the Romans. To ensure the security of their new acquisitions, the Caliphate repeatedly invaded the centre of Asia Minor, sometimes reaching Constantinople. Thus, 'annually from 663 to 667, the Arabs plundered the Roman lands of Asia Minor, taking many captives and utterly devastating the Roman farmlands and cities'.⁶ The Byzantines resisted stubbornly, holding back the Arab onslaught, but in 692 the troops of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II were defeated. To achieve peace, they were forced to relinquish Armenia (which had rebelled against Byzantium), after which the Arabs seized Kartli to the north, firmly establishing themselves there, as evidenced by the fact that they minted their own coins here at this time. As a result, at the turn of the 7th-8th centuries, having finally conquered Armenia, as well as Kartli and Arran (Albania) along with the Caspian regions, the Arabs formed the Caliphate's province of 'Arminiya' with its centre in the city of Dvin. These countries would remain part of the Arab Caliphate until the second half of the 9th century when independent Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian states of the Bagratid era were revived on the ruins of Arminiya.⁷

Shifting Alliances in the Western Caucasus

Thus, if previously only Kartli had been the object of Arab invasions, now it was the turn of Lazica itself. 'The appearance of a strong enemy on the eastern borders of Lazica and the political anarchy caused by the fierce struggle for the throne in Byzantium itself at the end of the 7th and beginning of the 8th centuries created a favourable environment for the strengthening of separatist sentiments in Colchis'.⁸ The weakening of Byzantium's position in this region is indicated by the defection of Sergius, the patrician of Lazica, and its capital, Archaeopolis, to the Arab side in 696-97. 'Sergius, patrician of Lazica and Varnukia, also rebelled and gave these lands over to the Arabs in submission'.⁹ In the early 8th century, the Arabs also captured some fortresses along the Kodori Gorge (in central Apsilia). This is also attested by the Byzantine historian Theophanes the Chronicler. From his accounts, it becomes known that the Arabs, along with Lazica, seized Apsilia and Abasgia, whose population also undertook anti-Byzantine actions, wishing thereby to free themselves from subordination to the Byzantine Empire. However, the ruler of Apsilia, Marinus, did not support the actions taken by the Abasgians; they remained allies of the Byzantines. The absence of Apsilia among the regions listed by Theophanes (Abasgia, Lazica, Iberia) where the Saracens (Arabs) held sway in 717 indicates that it remained within the sphere of influence of the Byzantine imperial administration.¹⁰

In the end, unlike the Apsilians, the Abasgians openly adopted a pro-Arab position, thus siding with the Armenians and Laz against the imperial presence in the Caucasus. This is

quite understandable and explicable; the peoples of Transcaucasia, both in the era of Emperor Justinian I and in subsequent eras of Byzantine rule, experienced colonial oppression, and the desire to liberate themselves by means of another, even if formidable, power was paramount. It is true that I. Sh. Agrba believes that the Byzantine authorities incriminated the Abkhazians in aiding the Arabs with the aim of disrupting the friendly relations between the Abasgians and the Alans.¹¹

At this time, a serious situation had also developed in the North Caucasus. Here, the Khazar Khaganate and Alania, which, like Apsilia, maintained loyalty and allied relations with the Byzantine Empire, came under attack from the Arab Caliphate. According to the Arab historian and theologian Al-Dhahabi, the Alans themselves were subjected to violence by the Arab conquerors: a passage from the *History of Islam* 'informs us that in 724 al-Jarrah ibn Abdallah al-Hakami invaded Khazaria via the Darial route, and that the following year he collected taxes from the Alans, both poll tax and land tax'.¹² Therefore, it is not surprising that the Alans, feeling hostility towards the Arabs and their allies, often acted as allies of the Byzantines themselves. This is attested by Theophanes the Chronicler, who colourfully described the journey of the future Byzantine emperor, the *spatharios* Leo the Isaurian, through the lands of Lazica and Apsilia to Alania. He had been sent there specifically by Emperor Justinian II, who suspected him of disloyalty. According to Theophanes, Justinian did not want to harm him openly but retained a secret suspicion of Leo, whom he sent to Alania with money to incite the Alans against Abasgia.¹³ 'Leo, arriving in Lazica, left the money for safekeeping in Phasis. Taking a few local inhabitants with him, he went to Apsilia, and, having crossed the Caucasus Mountains, came to Alania'. Further, the chronicler, seeking to show what happens to those who go against the empire, reveals the full diplomatic talent of Leo the Isaurian, who punished the defiant Abasgians at the hands of the Alans.¹⁴

The Strategic Aims of the Caliphate

Thus, interpreting the information from Theophanes the Chronicler, Agustí Alemany concluded that 'this episode represents a fragment from the history of the struggle between Byzantium and the Umayyad Caliphate in the 7th-8th centuries for dominance over the Caucasian lands'.¹⁵ In this instance, the Byzantines, with the help of Leo the Isaurian and the Alans in 708-709, were able to intimidate the Abasgians, and the previously hostile Abasgians became allies and subjects of Byzantium. Such a manoeuvre allowed the empire in the 730s to create a bastion of its power in the Eastern Black Sea region in the form of Abasgia and Apsilia, which in turn provoked subsequent Arab campaigns.¹⁶

Meanwhile, one very important point must be taken into account: the appearance of the Arabs in Western Transcaucasia had a specific purpose; it was not a simple seizure of territories subordinate to the Byzantine Empire and the establishment of their own dominion over them. First and foremost, it was the creation of a staging ground (*platzdarm*) in these territories against their main enemy in the North Caucasus, the Khazar Khaganate. In this sense, this region held strategic importance for the Arab Caliphate, which consisted of bypassing the Khaganate from the west and striking it in the rear through the lands of the Alans, thus creating a 'broad front of struggle against the Khazar Khaganate along the entire length of the Main Caucasian Range'.¹⁷ It seems no coincidence that in the early 8th century the Arabs were stationed (as mentioned above) in the fortresses of the Kodor Gorge (for

smaller incursions into the North Caucasus and Khazaria) and in the capital of Lazica, Tsikhe-Goji. Their establishment in Transcaucasia, writes M. I. Artamonov, accompanied by the organisation of their own administration there, led to new clashes with the Khazars, who henceforth acted against the Arabs not only independently but also as loyal allies of the empire.¹⁸ The Khazars more than once drew Arab forces upon themselves, thereby giving Byzantium the opportunity to save itself from ruin.

As a result, the Greater Caucasus became a natural barrier between the two warring parties (the Khazar Khaganate and the Arab Caliphate). 'The struggle for control over the mountain passes became one of the strategic tasks of the rival sides. The most bloody battles unfolded for the Derbent Pass and the Darial Gorge—the "Gates of the Alans". Here, in a strategically important location, are the remains of an ancient defensive structure, the Kasar fortification, which protected against threats from the north. 'Possession of it ensured control over the pass routes that ran through the basin'.¹⁹ A similar situation is observed in Abkhazia, namely in Apsilia, with its centre in the Tsebelda Valley. One of the most important highways of that time (the Darin route) passed through here, connecting both the North and South Caucasus via the Klukhor Pass. Further to the northwest was another convenient crossing, the Sanchar Pass. Near the Darin route, also in a strategically important location, was the fortress of Sideron, also called the Iron Fortress for its impregnability.

According to Theophanes the Chronicler, upon returning from the lands of the Alans and punishing the Byzantines' Abasgian enemies, Leo the Isaurian found himself once again in Apsilia. Here he found part of the army that had fled from the Arabs and was hiding in the gorges. Taking them with him, the *spatharios*, unable to exit by another route, laid siege to the strategically important Iron Fortress. Describing this event, the Byzantine historian notes: 'There was a fortress there called Sideron, whose *topoterites* was a certain Pharasmanes. He had fallen under the power of the Saracens, but maintained peace with the Armenians as well'.²⁰ The siege of Sideron and the unsuccessful resistance of the pro-Arab garrison, followed by a battle in which the Romans, 50 Alans (accompanying Leo the Isaurian) and, crucially, 300 Apsilians led by Marinus, 'the first among the Apsilians', who came to Isaurian's aid, decided the fate of the Sideron garrison.²¹ After taking the fortress, having successfully completed his anti-Arab mission, Leo the Isaurian visited the residence of Marinus, which was apparently located on Mount Shapky, 7 km from Tsabal, known from written sources as Rogotoria. 'Thus, even at the beginning of the 8th century, the Apsilians, unlike their neighbours the Laz and the Abasgians, continued to maintain a traditional pro-Byzantine orientation', coming to the aid of the Byzantines even in the harshest conditions.²²

The Campaigns of Marwan and Sulayman

The Arabs, who had an overall military superiority, set themselves the task of finally defeating the Khazars, who posed a great danger to their interests in Transcaucasia, by turning this territory (including Abkhazia) directly into one of the staging grounds for the fight against the Khazar Khaganate. This is attested, in particular, by the Armenian historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi: in the late 720s, the Arab commander al-Jarrah ibn Abdallah al-Hakami (via Apsilia and the Klukhor Pass) twice (in 723-725 and 729-730) invaded Alania and Khazaria,²³ evidently along the Darin route.²⁴ Each time these campaigns were episodic

in nature, but they had serious consequences. The areas adjacent to the main Arab route of march (Kutaisi-Archaeopolis-Tsebelda) suffered particularly.²⁵

By the mid-730s, the struggle between the Arab Caliphate and Khazaria became even more fierce. In 735, the Arab commander, governor of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Jazira, and future caliph, Marwan ibn Muhammad, arrived in Transcaucasia with a relatively small army. He stopped in the capital of Armenia, Dvin, to reinforce his army with Armenian warriors. Furthermore, it was critically necessary for him to have a secure rear in Armenia for a serious war with the Khazars.²⁶ In 737, Marwan ibn Muhammad, at the head of a huge army, delivered a decisive blow to the Khazars, attacking simultaneously through Derbent and Darial. As a result of a crushing defeat, the Khazars were forced into a peace that lasted 25 years.²⁷ But before this campaign, as M. I. Artamonov reports, in 735 Marwan pacified the rebellious Georgians in Transcaucasia,²⁸ and 'by the beginning of 737, Marwan had finally pacified Transcaucasia and was ready for a decisive battle with the Khazars'²⁹ on the North Caucasus, thereby securing his rear in the South Caucasus.³⁰ As the text of Ibn al-A'tham states, Marwan 'moved with his entire army of 150 thousand men by the shortest route to the Khazar capital on the Lower Volga, to al-Bayda, later known by the name of Itil, without being distracted by any secondary objectives and without deviating to either the Kuban or the Don. Other Arab authors, Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), testify to the same, but very briefly and therefore not entirely clearly and convincingly'.³¹

However, sometimes a blind adherence to the sequence of events in medieval Arab sources, associated with one date or another, presents us with the problem of correlation with the dating of the events themselves, as well as those mentioned in other (non-Arab) sources. In this case, this may also apply to the Battle of Anakopia,³² which took place near the fortress of the same name, the main line of walls of which was erected at the end of the 7th century with the direct participation of the Byzantines, who were alarmed by new Arab invasions.³³ It should be noted in this regard that information about the battle has been preserved only in two medieval Georgian written sources: the *Life of Vakhtang Gorgasali* by Juansher Juansheriani and the anonymous early medieval work *The Martyrdom of David and Constantine*. According to their contradictory accounts, Marwan ibn Muhammad traversed all the lands of the Caucasus, ravaged Eastern and Western Georgia while pursuing the Georgian kings of Kartli, Mir and Archil, who had fled to Abkhazia. Along the way, he 'captured all the towns and fortresses, including the triple-walled fortress of Tsikhe-Goji, and overcame the border wall of Kelasuri'. Entering Abkhazia, he 'ravaged the city of Tskhum in Abshilia. Then he approached the Anakopian fortress' and laid siege to it, while the Arab commander himself 'camped near Pitiota, in the city on the sea coast called Tskhum'.³⁴ However, the advantageous strategic position and fortifications of the fortress at Anakopia, as well as the foul local ecosystem and the subsequent battle, thwarted all of Marwan's plans to capture Abkhazia and, presumably, to advance further to the northwest, and he retreated. It is unknown 'how the future map of Eastern and Western Europe might have been drawn if the Arabs had captured Anakopia'.³⁵ In this sense, Marwan's campaign in Abkhazia can be understood as an attempt to find a northwestern passage to the North Caucasus.³⁶ At the same time, his unsuccessful campaign,³⁷ apparently did not affect the mountain fortress of Sideron, but after the next campaign by a new Arab commander, a serious blow was dealt to the Byzantines in this part of the Eastern Black Sea region as well.

As Theophanes the Chronicler reports, in 738 the Arab commander Sulayman ibn Hisham, heading into the mountainous territory of Abkhazia, entered Apsilia and besieged Sideron, where Eustathios, son of the 'illustrious patrician' Marinus and ruler of the Apsilians, had taken refuge, guided by the main goal of continuing to deliver pre-emptive strikes against Khazaria from the direction of Apsilia. 'In this year (738), Sulayman, son of Hisham, made a campaign into Roman lands; he took by siege the so-called iron fortress and led away captive Eustathios, son of Marinus the patrician'.³⁸ For his refusal to accept Islam, Eustathios was executed. He was subsequently canonised as a saint.

Traces of this last battle with the Arabs on the territory of Abkhazia have been preserved to this day. In Tsibilium (Tsebelda), on top of the latest (6th-7th centuries) cultural layers, a huge number of river cobblestones have been found, each weighing up to twenty-five kilograms, which served as catapult projectiles. The besiegers brought these munitions from four kilometres away, with the help of which breaches were made in the walls. Through them, the Arabs rushed into the flame-engulfed territory within the walls, where the Apsilian garrison was hiding.³⁹

Conclusion

Thus, it can be said that in the first half of the 8th century, four Arab campaigns were conducted in Abkhazia: 1) at the beginning of the century, 2) in the late 720s (by the Arab commander al-Jarrah ibn Abdallah al-Hakami), 3) in the early to mid-730s (by Marwan ibn Muhammad), and 4) in 738 (by Sulayman ibn Hisham).

Returning to the battle of Anakopia and the defeat of the Arabs beneath its walls, it should be noted that this circumstance played a decisive role in the history of the Eastern Black Sea region. It allowed the Principality of Abasgia to rise to a leading position at the expense of Apsilia and Lazica, which had been bled dry by the Arabs. The subsequent transformation of the principality into a kingdom occurred with the active participation of the Khazars, who had close kinship ties with the Abasgian kings and who, like the Byzantines, needed a strong, allied Christian early feudal state capable of resisting the Arabs.

Footnotes

¹ Klimovich, L.I. *A Book about the Quran, its Origin and Mythology*. Moscow, 1986. P. 70.

² Murad Adzhi. *Medieval History of the Turks and the Great Steppe*. Moscow, 2001. P. 49.

³ Voronov, Yu.N. *The Secret of the Tsebelda Valley*. Moscow, 1975. P. 152.

⁴ Linking the end of the Tsebelda culture with the Arab invasions of Abkhazia (in its historical ethno-political regions: Abasgia and Apsilia) may be premature, according to the latest data, since such a premise does not fully correlate with stage IV/11, in which the upper date for the existence of the said culture is designated as 640/670. (Kazanskiy, M.M., Mastykova, A.V. 'Federates in the Empire: the Evolution of the Tsibilium Necropolis (2nd-7th centuries)' // *Second Abkhazian International Archaeological Conference (8-12 November 2008)*. Conference Proceedings. Sukhum, 2011. P. 110). The first appearance of the Arabs on the

territory of Abkhazia—Apsilia and Misiminia—should, most likely, be dated to the years between 698-700.

⁵ Khoneliya, R.A. 'Some Questions on the Political History of Abkhazia in the 6th-8th centuries according to Armenian Sources' // *Collection of Scientific Works of Postgraduate Students*. Sukhum, 1967. P. 209; Gunba, M.M. *Abkhazia in the First Millennium AD (Socio-economic and Political Relations)*. Sukhum, 1989. P. 198.

⁶ Velichko, A.M. *History of the Byzantine Emperors. From Justin to Theodosius III*. Moscow, 2012. P. 356.

⁷ Shaginyan, A.K. *Armenia and the Countries of the South Caucasus under Byzantine-Iranian and Arab Rule*. St. Petersburg, 2011. P. 6.

⁸ Voronov, Yu.N. *Colchis at the Turn of the Middle Ages. Scientific Works. Volume One*. Sukhum, 2006. P. 373.

The Chronicle of Theophanes the Byzantine (trans. from Greek by V.I. Obolensky and F.A. Tarnovsky, with a preface by O.M. Bodyansky). Moscow, 1884. P. 271.

¹⁰ Chichurov, V.S. *Byzantine Historical Works: The "Chronographia" of Theophanes, the "Breviarium" of Nikephoros. Texts, Translation, Commentary*. Moscow, 1980. P. 65.

¹¹ Agrba, I.Sh. *The Abkhazian Kingdom and Byzantium (8th-10th centuries)*. Sukhum, 2011. P. 61.

¹² Quoted from: Agustí Alemany. *Alans in Ancient and Medieval Written Sources*. Moscow, 2003. P. 324.

¹³ Chichurov, V.S. *Byzantine Historical Works: The "Chronographia" of Theophanes, the "Breviarium" of Nikephoros. Texts, Translation, Commentary*. Moscow, 1980. P. 65.

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 66.

¹⁵ Agustí Alemany. *Alans in Ancient and Medieval Written Sources*. Moscow, 2003. P. 273.

¹⁶ Vinogradov, A.Yu. 'Byzantine Policy in the Eastern Black Sea Region (second half of the 7th - first half of the 10th century)' // *Antiquities of the Western Caucasus*. Issue 1. Krasnodar, 2013. P. 173.

¹⁷ Khoneliya, R.A. 'Some Questions on the Political History of Abkhazia in the 6th-8th centuries according to Armenian Sources' // *Collection of Scientific Works of Postgraduate Students*. Sukhum, 1967. P. 212.

¹⁸ Artamonov, M.I. *History of the Khazars*. Leningrad, 1962. P. 202.

¹⁹ Albegova, Z. 'An Arab Outpost in the Mountains of the Central Caucasus' // *Heritage of Generations*. No. 1 (8). Moscow, 2010. Pp. 35-37.

²⁰ Chichurov, V.S. *Byzantine Historical Works: The "Chronographia" of Theophanes, the "Breviarium" of Nikephoros. Texts, Translation, Commentary.* Moscow, 1980. P. 67.

²¹ Ibid. P. 67.

²² Voronov, Yu.N. *The Secret of the Tsebelda Valley.* Moscow, 1975. P. 153.

²³ Quoted from: Anchabadze, Z.V. *From the History of Medieval Abkhazia (6th-17th centuries).* Sukhum, 1959. P. 92; Khoneliya, R.A. 'Some Questions on the Political History of Abkhazia in the 6th-8th centuries according to Armenian Sources' // *Collection of Scientific Works of Postgraduate Students.* Sukhum, 1967. P. 212.

²⁴ Nevertheless, it is not known exactly which route he took into Alania, but he returned through the Alan Gates, i.e., through the Darial Gorge (Bolshakov, O.G. *History of the Caliphate: in 4 volumes. Volume 4: "The Apogee and Fall of the Arab Caliphate 695-750".* Moscow, 2010. P. 166). However, the most convenient route for an invasion of Alania appears to have been through the Klukhor Pass.

²⁵ Voronov, Yu.N. *Colchis at the Turn of the Middle Ages. Scientific Works. Volume One.* Sukhum, 2006. P. 376.

²⁶ Bolshakov, O.G. *History of the Caliphate: in 4 volumes. Volume 4: "The Apogee and Fall of the Arab Caliphate 695-750".* Moscow, 2010. P. 186. Meanwhile, Marwan was appointed governor of Transcaucasia along with Northern Mesopotamia in 732. This is also confirmed by Muslim authors. But he was only able to begin his offensive against the Khazars in 737. (Shaginyan, A.K. *Armenia and the Countries of the South Caucasus under Byzantine-Iranian and Arab Rule.* St. Petersburg, 2011. P. 243).

²⁷ Albegova, Z. 'An Arab Outpost in the Mountains of the Central Caucasus' // *Heritage of Generations.* No. 1 (8). Moscow, 2010. P. 38.

²⁸ Artamonov, M.I. *History of the Khazars.* Leningrad, 1962. P. 218.

²⁹ Novoseltsev, A.P. *The Khazar State and its Role in the History of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.* Moscow, 1990. P. 184.

³⁰ Artamonov, M.I. *History of the Khazars.* Leningrad, 1962. P. 218.

³¹ Ibid. P. 223.

³² The dating of the battle recorded in historiography is 737-738, which does not correlate with the beginning of Marwan's campaign into Khazaria. In particular, A. Shaginyan, comparing the information from al-Tabari, as well as al-Kufi (their mentions of a "muddy campaign" in 732) and Juansher Juansheriani (who tells of incessant downpours during Marwan's campaign), suggests that Marwan's campaign into Kartli, and then into Lazica and Abkhazia, should be dated to the end of 732, during the season of heavy rains (Shaginyan, 2011. P. 241).

³³ Amichba, G.A. *New Athos and its Surroundings.* Sukhum, 1988. P. 37.

³⁴ Quoted from: *Reports of Medieval Georgian Written Sources about Abkhazia*. Texts collected, translated into Russian, with a preface and commentary by G.A. Amichba. Sukhum, 1986. Pp. 9, 23, 26.

³⁵ Bgazhba, O.Kh., Lakoba, S.Z. *History of Abkhazia from Ancient Times to the Present Day*. Sukhum, 2007. P. 119.

³⁶ Vinogradov, A.Yu. 'Byzantine Policy in the Eastern Black Sea Region (second half of the 7th - first half of the 10th century)' // *Antiquities of the Western Caucasus*. Issue 1. Krasnodar, 2013. P. 162.

³⁷ However, the fact that the Arab sources, which described Marwan's significant campaigns in detail, did not mention a word about the Arab commander's grandiose campaign into Western Transcaucasia cannot but be alarming. It is also strange that other written sources—Byzantine, Armenian, and Persian (known to us)—are silent about this.

³⁸ *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Byzantine* (trans. from Greek by V.I. Obolensky and F.A. Tarnovsky, with a preface by O.M. Bodyansky). Moscow, 1884. P. 301.

³⁹ Voronov, Yu.N. *Colchis at the Turn of the Middle Ages. Scientific Works. Volume One*. Sukhum, 2006. P. 378.