

THE PEOPLING OF THE CAUCASUS

Located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, the Caucasus region has played a critical role in the dissemination of languages, ideas, and cultures since prehistoric times. In this study, Aram Yardumian and Theodore Schurr explore the dispersal of human groups in the Caucasus beginning in the Paleolithic period. Using evidence from archaeology, linguistics, and anthropological genetics, they trace changes in settlement patterns, cultural practices, and genetic variation. Highlighting the region's ecological diversity, natural resources, and agricultural productivity, Yardumian and Schurr reconstruct the timings and likely migration routes for human settlement following the Last Glacial Maximum, as well as the possible connections of these expansions to regional economies. Based on analysis of archaeological site reports, linguistic relationships, and genetic data previously published separately and in different languages, their synthesis of the most up-to-date evidence opens new vistas onto the chronology and human dynamics of the Caucasus' prehistory.

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THE PEOPLING OF THE
CAUCASUS

EARLY HUMAN SETTLEMENT
AT THE CROSSROADS
OF CONTINENTS

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accurate or appropriate.

First let us recall that for the Armenians and Georgians, Ransians and Movkanians, Hers and Leks, Megrelians and Caucasians, there was a single father named T'argamos. This T'argamos was the son of Tarši, grandson of Iap'et', son of Noah. Now this T'argamos was a giant. After the division of tongues — when they built the tower at Babylon, and the tongues were divided there and they were scattered from there over the whole world — this the earth, he came and settled between the mountains Masis and Aragats. . . . From his sons eight men became notable, the most valiant and renowned. The first was Hayk the second Kartlos, the third Bardos, the fourth Movkan, the fifth Lekan, the sixth Heros, the seventh Kovkas, the eighth Egres.

**Leonti Mroveli, *History of the Kings of Kartli*, translated by
R. W. Thomson**

The tribes occupying almost all the rest of the [western] coasts are the Blackcloaks and the Coraxi, with the Colchian city of Dioscurias on the river Anthemus, now deserted, but once so famous that according to Timosthenes 300 tribes speaking different languages used to resort to it; and subsequently business was carried on there by Roman traders with the help of a staff of 130 interpreters.

**Pliny the Elder, *Natural History Book iv*, translated by
H. Rackham**

While travellers of the nineteenth century were drawn to Egypt and Mesopotamia in the hope of observing the remains of legendary ancient civilisations, they came to the Caucasus for a different reason. This intrepid cohort of Europeans, a combination of the curious and the pious, were attracted to the mystique that borderlands hold.

Anthony Sagona, *The Archaeology of the Caucasus*

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Note: The maps appearing in Figures 3.3, 4.1, 4.3, 6.3, 8.4, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.10, 8.12, and 8.13 were prepared using QGIS Desktop v. 3.22.3 with the EPSG 4326 coordinate system. Continent and country boundary vector data were procured from free-use, publicly available World Health Organization assets. The datapoints were organized by latitude/longitude coordinates from the provided Excel spreadsheets, and these geospatial coordinates were used as the sample points in an Inverse Distant Weighted (IDW) interpolation calculation using a weight of 3 or 4 to help clarify the produced raster visualization’s color ramp and decrease the known disadvantage of IDWs with irregular sample-point distributions that produce visual peaks and pits around sample points. These rasters were then clipped by the vector land boundaries, their color ramps clipped to 20 values between the min and max, and exported in image formats.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AMH: Anatomically modern humans
- ANE: Ancient North Eurasians
- BCE: Before Common Era
- BMAC: Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex
- cal BP: calibrated years before present
- CBMP: Carpatho-Balkan Metallurgical Province
- CE: Common Era
- CHG: Caucasus hunter-gatherers
- EBA: Early Bronze Age
- EEF: Early European farmers
- EHG: Eastern European hunter-gatherers
- EIA: Early Iron Age
- EUP: Early Upper Paleolithic
- IE: Indo-European
- KYA: Thousands of years ago
- LBA: Late Bronze Age
- LGM: Last Glacial Maximum
- LMP: Late Middle Paleolithic
- LUP: Late Upper Paleolithic
- MBA: Middle Bronze Age
- MIA: Middle Iron Age
- MYA: Millions of years ago
- PIE: Proto-Indo-European
- PPN: Pre-Pottery Neolithic
- WHG: Western European hunter-gatherers
- YBP: Years before present