opens with an introduction recapping the traditional views of the subject and his own strongly argued response to them, with a survey of the principal primary sources. After an examination of the origins and very early history from 900–1025, Peacock explores the main points of contention, namely the relationship between the Seljūqs and the tribes, the Seljūq conquests and the army, and finally the Seljūqs and Islam. The final chapter examines the Seljūqs and Anatolia, and offers some new perspectives on their migration for which Peacock has employed contemporary Armenian and Georgian sources to strengthen his contention that the Turcoman domination of Anatolia was facilitated by the economic decline and steady fall in population of the region.

Peacock has produced a very readable and controversial study which should succeed not only in re-awakening interest in the Seljūqs themselves but in opening debates about the very nature of their invasion and rule. The platitudes and myths which have become embedded in our attitude towards the Seljūqs must now be reconsidered and the whole period scrutinized from a new perspective and for this our gratitude must lie with Andrew Peacock.

George Lane

FRANÇOISE COMPANJEN, LÁSZLÓ MARÁCZ and LIA VERSTEEGH (eds):
Exploring the Caucasus in the 21st Century (Essays on Culture, History and Politics in a Dynamic Context).
254 pp. Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2010. £25. ISBN 978 908964183 0.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X1100019X

Initial reaction to delving into this collection is that the manuscript should have been checked by a native English speaker before being handed to the printer. Not all contributions are littered to the same degree with wrong choices of words, phrases, constructions, or capricious use of commas, but none is totally free from such defects. This is one reason why readers interested in exploring the Caucasus will turn away from this volume. Another, more serious disincentive would be the content.

The book evidently seeks to illuminate, through a non-cohesive set of essays, aspects of the transition of parts of the Caucasus from Soviet administrative units through to whatever state destiny ultimately assigns them. The introduction (pp. 11–25), composed by the editorial triumvirate, is followed by eleven articles: Marácz's "Gábor Bálint de Szentkatolne (1844–1913) and the study of Kabardian" (pp. 27–46); René Does' "The ethnic-political arrangement of the peoples of the Caucasus" (pp. 47–61); Michael Kemper's "An island of classical Arabic in the Caucasus: Dagestan" (pp. 63–89); Marc Jansen's "Chechnya and Russia, between revolt and loyalty" (pp. 91–110); Companjens' "Recent political history of the South Caucasus in the context of transition" (pp. 111–33); Max Bader's "Authoritarianism and party politics in the South Caucasus" (pp. 135–55); Oliver Reisner's "Between state and nation-building: the debate about 'ethnicity' in Georgian citizens' ID card" (pp. 157–79); Companjen's "The war in South Ossetia, August 2008: four perspectives" (pp. 181–93); Charlotte Hille's "The recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia: a new era in international law" (pp. 195–209); Versteegh's "Freedom of speech in the Caucasus: watch-dog needed in Armenia and Azerbaijan" (pp. 211–32); and Eva Navarro Martínez's "Beyond frontiers: engagement and artistic freedom in South Caucasus modern

culture (Armenia and Azerbaijan)" (pp. 233–51). The book ends with a note on the contributors. There is no holistic bibliography or index.

Marácz's paper is totally out of place, being almost wholly about the Hungarian linguist named in the chapter's title, who, in seeking to find Caucasian congeners for Hungarian, produced an early but little-known Kabardian dictionary of 611 pages. The Hungarian word for "god" (*isten*) is apparently of opaque etymology, and attention has recently been drawn to Bálint's linkage of the word with "the Kabardian form *s-te-n* that means 'fire-give'" (p. 41). However, the actual Kabardian for "the one who gives fire" is *ma:f'a zyt*, whereas *s-te-n* must be the verb "I shall give". Readers unfamiliar with the Caucasus should be aware that the author seems to confuse the terms "Circassian" and "Cherkess". In English "Circassian" is the usual cover term for the North-West Caucasian people who style themselves [a:dyga] and should thus equate to "Adyghe", preferably so spelt. These people live in three Russian administrative provinces: Adyghea is home to (most of) the western dialect speakers; Kabardino-Balkaria contains most of the eastern dialect speakers; and a portion live in Karachay-Cherkessia. Confusingly, amongst the diaspora in Turkey, "Cherkess" refers to any Circassian or even any North West Caucasian. The Avars mentioned on p. 36 are not to be confused with the largest of the Daghestanian peoples, known by this name in Russian (and, through Russian influence, elsewhere). Martinez's paper would also be more at home in an art journal, where the article could be enhanced with examples of the oeuvres of the artists discussed.

Does aims to present a potted history of the Caucasus, its peoples and administrative divisions, but could have been more careful and fulsome in his treatment. His initial assertion (that Georgia's King David IV, 1089–1125, "conquered [*recte* (re) captured] Tbilisi from the Seljuk Turks in 1122"), is unfortunate, for it was in 1121 that David defeated the Seljūks at the Battle of Didgori, driving the Arabs out of Tbilisi, after centuries of occupation, in 1122. It is often forgotten that there was no "Georgian Kingdom" coterminous with what most people today visualize as Georgia to be annexed by Russia in 1801 (p. 48) but only the central/eastern kingdom(s) of Kartli/K'akheti.

Kemper's paper is an instructive survey of the historical importance of Arabic and its literary heritage in Daghestan, where, given the renewed interest in Islam, the language is enjoying a resurgence in the madrasas. But note that Georgia and Chechenia lie to the West (not the east) of Daghestan (p. 65).

Jansen examines the still precarious state of Chechenia under the leadership of the maverick Ramzan Kadyrov, with instability growing in the neighbouring provinces of Daghestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. Though Shamil was the most prominent leader of the resistance against nineteenth-century Russian encroachment in Daghestan and Chechenia, his leadership did not begin until 1834 (p. 92), being preceded by those of two fellow Avar Imams, Ghazi Mohammad and Hamza Bek, unmentioned by Jansen.

Bader looks into the nature of Transcaucasian political parties, contrasting them with Western models. The worrying conclusion for those hoping to see democracy established in the region is: "The dominant models of party behavior in the South Caucasus, then, are vote-seeking and office-seeking; the third model of party behavior – policy-seeking – which is believed to be the most conducive to democratization, is virtually absent among relevant political parties" (p. 149).

Reisner discusses the heated (but fascinating) debate that began in 1999 over whether the old Soviet practice of stating the holder's ethnicity in his/her passport should be followed or abandoned in Georgia. The most prominent advocate of its preservation was Guram Sharadze of the Rustaveli Literature Institute, who feared that non-identification of an individual's ethnicity would lead to (further)

dismemberment of the Georgian state. He was assassinated in the centre of Tbilisi in 2007. Reisner warns: "Despite the existence of an independent state, Georgian society is in serious danger of becoming 'pathologic', if it does not succeed in developing a universally binding normative order … State building has been concurrent with the process of nation building. The needs of the latter have in many ways complicated the coherence of the former" (p. 170).

Hille reworks one aspect of her 2003 doctoral dissertation, an expanded version of which was published in 2010. Her conclusion (that any of the proposals to include Abkhazia and South Ossetia within a (con)federal or common state with Georgia are further from realization following Russia's 2008 recognition of their independence) surely needs strengthening – any such chance is non-existent. The conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia ante-dated (and did not follow) Georgia's independence (p. 199).

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been members of the Council of Europe since January 2001 and are thus required to observe the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, Article 10 of which is concerned with freedom of speech. Versteegh discusses infringements of Article 10 and expresses surprise "that so few individuals lodge complaints at the Court of Justice" (p. 228). This, again, raises questions about the level of commitment to European democratic values in these two states. It is a pity that Georgia was not included in the presentation.

This leaves the two sloppy contributions by Companjen. The second especially reads like hastily written lecture notes. There are so many questionable but unquestioned assertions that one cannot possibly address them all in such a short review, and so I mention just one. Only the Upper K'odor Valley remained outside Abkhazian control after the war with Georgia (1992–93), but this was retaken in the August 2008 hostilities. Contrary to what is stated on pp. 188 and 190, the same did not apply to the Gal Region, and, if Companjen thinks that "Abkhazian infrastructure has not been damaged" (p. 190), she should pay a visit to the capital and the Gulripsh and Ochamchira Regions to see for herself the severity of the damage inflicted, damage which is still visible largely thanks to the years of sanctions imposed on Abkhazia by *inter alia* Yeltsin's Russia, something which is often ignored by those who erroneously see Abkhazians as Moscow's puppets.

All in all, and *pace* Ronald Suny, author of the back-cover encomium, this is most certainly not a good place for anyone interested in becoming acquainted with Caucasian affairs to start.

George Hewitt

SOUTH ASIA

HELEN PHILON (ed.) (with photographs by Clare Arni):
Silent Splendour: Palaces of the Deccan, 14th–19th Centuries.
148 pp. Mumbai: Marg Publications on behalf of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, 2010. $68. ISBN 978 81 85026 96 1.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X11000206

Silent Splendour: Palaces of the Deccan, edited by Helen Philon, is a welcome contribution to a burgeoning field of research, addressing specialists and non-specialists