on the paintings, as much as two years before the completion date, Dr Canby deduces, they were executed more or less in the same order in which the manuscript was written. In addition, she calculates, there must originally have been at least fifteen more. She illustrates all but three of these, and provides charts of the paintings in their proper order with exact details of the text associated with them. Her comments on the individual illustrations bring out his marked originality and include interesting suggestions regarding the models he used. This is an important contribution to the history of the Isfahan school and a major addition to the corpus of this industrious painter.

J. M. Rogers

ANDREW C.S. PEACOCK:
Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation.
(Routledge Studies in the History of Iran and Turkey.) xi, 190 pp.
London and New York: Routledge, 2010. £80. ISBN 978 0 415 54853 3.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X11000188

As Andrew Peacock observes in the introduction to this long overdue study, the Seljūqs have remained the neglected rulers of the medieval Muslim world, overshadowed by their more infamous successors, the Mongols, and by the more colourful Safavids, and Mamluks, despite the longevity of Seljūq rule, the extent of their vast dominions, and the persistence of their influence on the art, politics and administration of the wider region. Peacock's timely study of the early Seljūqs, following David Durand-Guédy's in-depth analysis of the emergence of Isfahan as the Seljūq capital, has gone some way to filling this gap. However, as well as providing a detailed account of the Seljūq clan from their probable beginnings in Khazaria to the death of the Great Seljūq, Sultan Alp Arslan in 1072, Peacock questions and assesses the many assumptions and myths which have become associated with the whole subject of the Seljūqs' appearance and ascendancy.

Central to his revised portrait of the Seljūqs is the relationship with their nomadic and tribal heritage; Peacock strongly rejects the assumption that they turned away from their past in their haste to assume civilized, Persian ways. He discounts as unsatisfactory the three entrenched theses that: first, the Seljūqs sought to adopt the Perso-Islamic model of leadership; second, the Seljūq sultans found their nomadic subjects an embarrassment; and third, that the Seljūqs were fully committed to the support of Sunni Islam and its institutions. Peacock sees the problem as originating in part in the instinctive aversion to steppe societies felt by sedentary cultures and expressed through successive histories and chronicles. Common accounts of the barbarous ways of steppe people, and their unfamiliarity and unease with "civilized society" expressed rather the expectations and contempt of the Byzantine and Muslim authors than any real experience. In fact, Toghril Beg and Alp Arslan did not reject their tribal support and nomadic heritage, and they were aware that their military prowess stemmed very much from their steppe experience.

Far from being a diversionary tactic to spare Iran and Iraq from their troublesome and embarrassing presence, the dispatching of the Turcoman tribesmen into Anatolia and Caucasia was deliberate and economically advantageous. Anatolia and the Caucasus offered the most suitable and attractive topography and climate for the Ghuzz tribesmen and, as the Mongols discovered two centuries later, these lands also most closely resembled the steppe from which they had migrated. Questions

of religion were not considered when the Turcomen descended on the villages and towns that they encountered, and Muslims suffered just as much as Christians. Tabriz's experience of the Seljūq tribesmen was no more positive than that of Byzantium or Armenia.

Senior members of the Seljūq family maintained their roles as traditional tribal chiefs while simultaneously developing an identity as Islamic rulers. Peacock argues that it was during the reign of Malikshah and his successors that the Seljūqs' role as tribal chiefs was finally subsumed to that of Perso-Islamic rulers, with the eventual appointment of a *shahna* to deal with tribal affairs. Sultan Sanjar's imprisonment by the Ghuzz in 548/1153 represents the final collapse of the relationship between the Seljūq sultan and the tribes, but certainly in the early days the Sultans valued their strong tribal links and role as chiefs. Peacock is able to demonstrate this change in attitude and place it in its historical context. By comparing court-sponsored chronicles he shows how the early versions of the *Maliknāma* composed for Alp Arslan dwell on the early Turkish oral traditions recounting the Seljūqs' Khazar connections and links with Transoxiana and yet in later editions of the *Maliknāma* from the late twelfth century, all references to these early events have been erased. Peacock concludes that by stressing their links to the Khazars and the use of such traditional titles as the Yabghū, Alp Arslan and Toghril Beg were laying claim to traditional steppe political legitimacy. The abandonment of such references by the late twelfth century suggests that such legitimacy was either no longer needed or had simply become irrelevant.

Seljūq attitudes to Islam are more problematic: the debate on who was responsible for the revival of Sunni Islam has long downplayed their active participation. Certainly Toghril's burning of the mosques in Sinjar and the widespread devastation of the agricultural lands surrounding Baghdad, along with the destruction of large Sunni areas of the city which he permitted, cast legitimate doubts on the depth and sincerity of his Sunnism. Peacock questions whether all the tribesmen and their leaders were Muslim and assumes that for many of those who were, their religion sat lightly upon them. Certainly the claim that Toghril Beg and his followers were devout Muslims and even that he was a fanatical Hanafī can be dismissed as being totally without foundation. Peacock concludes that the policy the Seljūqs pursued was characterized by pragmatism and driven primarily by political expediency, which would explain their flirtation with Hanbalism, their support for the Shiites of Karkh (p. 120), and two references to late conversion: Bar Hebraeus' account of their conversion on the eve of the invasion of Iran (p. 123) and ʿAzīmī's mention of Toghril's conversion to Islam in 1055. Peacock's assessment that "the image of the Seljūqs as the protectors of Sunnism is far removed from reality" appears convincing in the face of his evidence.

Peacock sees the Seljūq adoption of a *ghulam* army, which Alp Arslan possessed by 1071 and the Battle of Manzikurt, as a far more accurate indicator of the Seljūqs' development as Perso-Islamic rulers than their proclamation of the *khutba* and acceptance of the sultanate. The army was the hallmark of every established state in the Middle East and such a standing army was more reliable and controllable than a steppe army. The first recorded use of *ghulams* by the Seljūqs occurred in 1060 when Toghril fought the Fatimid commander Basāsīrī for control of Baghdad. Ibn al-Athir specifically notes that the troops accompanying Toghril into Baghdad in 1055 were "*al-ghuzz al-saljūqiya*", which suggests that the Seljūqs began to form their standing *ghulam* army shortly after the capture of Baghdad from the Buyids.

This is a controversial study but Peacock is convincing in his arguments, the level of detail, and his command of the wealth of primary source material. The book

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