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Abstract

The Christianization of the three kingdoms of late antique Caucasia—Armenia Major, eastern Georgia, and Caucasian Albania—has long been regarded as a watershed moment, and rightly so. With few exceptions, scholarship has proffered the image of three more-or-less ethnocentric conversions which necessarily resulted in the association of the “exotic” Caucasian frontier with Constantinople. But when the Byzantines’ own projections and understandings of the region are fused with the cosmopolitan and cross-cultural perspectives of those who actually lived within it, Caucasia’s internal dynamics and place on the Afro-Eurasian stage comes into sharper focus. Caucasia was not simply a strategic periphery where the tensions between Byzantium, on the one hand, and the Iranian and Islamic worlds, on the other, were played out. Though it perched on the geographical edge of these imperial and religious worlds, Caucasia—as a coherent and durable region—was an active and integral component of those worlds and was simultaneously affiliated with them. Further, Caucasia’s diverse but tightly interconnected Christianization contributed to the formation of the First Byzantine/Eastern Christian Commonwealth.