## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This volume has had a long gestation period. It began in summer 2013 when I went to Azerbaijan to investigate the possibility of excavating there. I became interested in Barda (Arm. Partaw, Arab. Bardha'a), since it suited my expertise in that it flourished through the late antique - early Islamic period and went from being a capital of a Christian kingdom to the base of a Muslim garrison. While I was there, I was invited to meet Professor Nargiz Pashayeva, rector of the Baku branch of Moscow State University, as someone interested in this project. We quickly realized that we shared a strong belief in making scholarship more accessible and more interconnected, and we talked about the idea of a research center that would be able to promote these aims. Under Professor Pashayeva's patronage, the Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Program was established, which had as its mandate the provision of postgraduate scholarships in the field of Caucasian Studies, the management of an archaeological mission at Barda (by the program's postdoctoral fellow, Paul Wordsworth) and the identification and translation of some key research produced in Russian and Azeri concerning the pre-modern history of the Caucasus. In order to complement the excavations being carried out at Barda, I thought it would be a good idea to direct some of our translation activity to past publications about that city and the polity of which it was the capital, and the result is the chapters below by Gadjiev, Babaev/Khalilov, Nuriev and Alikberov. To make it into a full-length volume, I included contributions from other scholars, leading to the remaining chapters, which are either original works (Fabian, Vacca, Lynch, Rapp, Eminli, Wordsworth's addendum to Nuriev and Howard-Johnston) or translations/reprints of classic articles (Minorsky, Zuckerman, Plontke-Lüning and Aleksidze/Mahé). The final outcome is the first volume in English on Caucasian Albania and an exploration of its culture by a diverse array of experts from many different language and cultural backgrounds, fulfilling the Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Program's aim of promoting cross-cultural academic collaboration. It will be published just as this program is transformed by a further large grant overseen by Professor Pashayeva into the permanently endowed "Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Centre for the Study of the History, Languages and Cultures of Azerbaijan, the Caucasus and Central Asia," which will facilitate research into these fields for a long time to come.

The translations were all done by Maroussia Bednarkiewicz, the first official Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Program translator and Oxford doctoral student, and myself, except for chapter 2 below, which was done by Jordan Lian (NYU) and myself. I am very grateful to Lara Fabian and Alison Vacca, who are much more knowledgeable about Caucasian archaeology and history than I and who have been very generous

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