Forging the Armenian Crown:
Mediating Kingship Across the Mediterranean and Eurasia

by

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Notes on Transliteration

I have transliterated Armenian into English according to the guidelines of the Armenian Romanization Table 2022 version, provided by the Library of Congress. The majority of the primary sources consulted are Armenian. But in cases when I reference Persian or Arabic words and names I used the transliteration guidelines provided by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (*IJMES*). For well-known names of cities, dynasties, historical figures, and events, such as the Battle of Manzikert, Hulagu Khan, Ilkhanate, Mamluk Sultanate, etc., I used a simplified Roman type.

Abstract

Forging the Armenian Crown: Mediating Kingship Across the Mediterranean and Eurasia diverges from dominant historiography that focuses on political history and instead privileges the ideological currents that shaped kingship in medieval Cilicia (c.a. 1080-1393). Through textual analyses of contemporary Armenian chronicles, poetry, manuscript colophons, alongside examination of select numismatic material, this dissertation explores how kingship was conceived, articulated, and reimagined during three hundred years of Armenian Cilicia.

Armenian Cilicia was exposed to political, religious, and cultural pressure virtually throughout its entire tenure as a political entity. Contrary to nationalist historiography that underscores continuity this dissertation highlights distinct moments of rupture and transformation that elicited adaptations to royal authority. Focusing on moments of reimagining and fissure this study complicates the construction of a continuous Armenian kingdom in Cilicia. Moreover, I argue that Armenian kingship in Cilicia was not an institution that was imported wholesale from the Armenian highlands, nor was it a Latinized Crusader Kingdom, alien to its Caucasian analogue. Rather, Armenian kingship was a dynamic and negotiated institution whose manifestation hinged on its contact with prevailing discourses of royal authority. These discourses are explored across a variety of medieval literary genres, including chronicles, lyric poems, numismatics, manuscript colophons, and court registers. In doing so, I demonstrate how the conventions inherent in respective genres shaped discursive landscapes. Emphasizing the active participation of the

producers of these sources, who operated as veritable kingmakers and whose works shaped the concepts of particular kingship.

What we see over the course of two centuries of Cilician Armenian kingship is an engagement with, and reshaping of, the ideas of royal authority that it encountered in the Mediterranean and Eurasia. Through this engagement, the Armenian imaginary of kingship periodically shifted to best survive and flourish in its contemporary circumstances. This dissertation provides a history of these reimaginings. Over the course of its analysis, the dissertation encounters ruptures caused by invasions, eschatological discourse, succession crises, competing claims of vassalage, contested and overlapping claims to kingship, as well as the conquest of the kingdom itself.

Forging the Armenian Crown answers the following questions: How was Armenian kingship constructed, refashioned and legitimized across the Mediterranean and Eurasia during an era of conquest? How did Armenian kingship contend with the contradictions inherent in its diplomatic relationships? What can Armenian Cilicia tell us about the relationship between discourse and politics?

Introduction

Armenian kingship in Cilicia was an institution whose existence was consistently negotiated over the course of its near two hundred year lifespan. This negotiation often manifested as aesthetic choices, literary and poetic tropes, religious patronage, and administrative conventions, in addition to myriad other forms. Because the kingdom was established in an area home to a variety of languages, religions, and cultures, its survival depended on the ability of the king to effectively convey his royal authority in terms that would have been legible to his neighbors. Given the decentralized and often adversarial nature of domestic politics in Cilicia moreover, Armenian kingship regularly directed its expressions of royal authority inward as a means of alternatively placating and cowing internal powerbrokers. As a result of these persistent tensions, kingship in Armenian Cilicia was expressed in terms that were often uneven, contradictory, and, above all, protean.

Consider, for example, the case of King Lewon II (c.a. 1270-1289). As the fourth king of Armenian Cilicia, Lewon began his reign in dire circumstances. The Cilician army had recently endured a devastating defeat at the hands of the ever-expanding and inimical Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt. During this battle, the then-prince Lewon was taken captive by the Mamluks, while his brother T‘oros was killed. As a result of the Cilicians’ defeat, the kingdom’s capital city Sis was sacked and burned, and thousands of its denizens were either killed or enslaved.[1] It was only after a series of concessions from Lewon’s father King Het‘um I that the former was freed from

[1] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk‘*, ed. H. Serobē V. Agĕlean (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1956), 247.

captivity, at which point Het‘um abdicated in his favor.[2] It is in this delicate and vulnerable backdrop that Lewon is crowned by the new Armenian Catholicos as King of the Armenians. Following his confirmation by his Mongol overlord Abaqa Khan and his successful pacification of the Mamluk sultan Baybars, Lewon proceeded to consolidate his royal authority.[3] This process is described at the end of the chronicle attributed to Smbat. Ostensibly, written by the older brother of the Armenian Cilician king, the chronicle serves as one of the most informative, yet mysterious texts ocovering this period.[4] However, before the author was able to expand on the king's decisions or have the story come to a resolution, the narrative is mysteriously and frustratingly cut short in the middle of its final sentence. The chronicler writes:

> In the same year [1272] King Lewon commanded the construction of a fortress at the foot of the Taurus mountains, across from the tomb of the audacious general Andreas, at a half day's journey distance, for the protection of that region and the renowned road to the Valley of the Pigs (*Khoz Dzoroy*). And it was completed in the same year, and it was named Achieved (*Katareats‘*). In the same year, they baptized the son of the king in the capital city of Sis, and he was received from the baptismal font by the Syriac Patriarch Ignatius, and he was named T‘oros, for his uncle who was killed by the Egyptians in the heat of battle. In the same year one of the servants of Edward [Edward I of England], who had come to this side of the sea and was in Acre, approached the king, for he was sitting alone and wearing only a thin tunic. And he leaned in close to the king's ear, as if he had some secret to tell

[2] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk‘*, 252.
[3] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk‘,* 252-253.
[4] Smbat Sparapet was a senior political figure in Cilicia. He was the brother of King Het‘um I and the son of the mighty regent Kostandin of Papeṛon. Over time, a chronicle written during the thirteenth century has come to be attributed to him. However, there are a several reasons why this suggestion has eluded verification. Sergio La Porta has written that due to the author's contradictions regarding the information about the Smbat that he provides, as well as the fact that he referred to Smbat in the third person he is almost certainly not the author. See Sergio La Porta, " The Chronicle Attributed to Smbat the Constable," in *Franks and Crusades in Medieval Eastern Christian Historiography*, ed. Alex Mallett (Brepols, 2020), 179-210. To that end, he refers to the chronicle, not as Smbat's Chronicle, but as the Chronicle attributed to Smbat. Because the critical edition of the text that I have used for this discussion credits Smbat with its authorship, I will continue to refer to the text as the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat throughout this dissertation. That being said, I will cite the text in the footnotes and bibliography as Smbat Sparapet's *Taregirk‘* [Annals] for the sake of consistency and clarity.

him. Then he drew his knife and stabbed at the king's chest. The king recoiled and reached for his sword with his right hand. And again he struck…[5]

This is the passage that ends the chronicle. One could have expected the theme of struggle to establish Armenian kingship in Cilicia to bring a stable resolution. Instead, the reader is met with a crowded scene of actors, places, and events around which power is articulated: The king hurriedly constructed a new strategic fortress near the tomb of a famous general with a Greek name; he had his son baptized by the patriarch of the Syriac church, in spite of the fact that Lewon, himself, was crowned by the Armenian Catholicos and also had his son Kostandin baptized by him;[6] the king named his son T'oros, invoking the memory of the 1266 Battle of Mari, in which Lewon's brother was killed; he was approached by an ambassador of Edward I of England, who tried to murder him. This series of actions, which seem unrelated and counterintuitive highlights the central question guiding this dissertation: How was Armenian kingship constructed, refashioned and legitimized across the Mediterranean and Eurasia during an era of conquest? How did Armenian kingship contend with the contradictions inherent in its diplomatic relationships? What can Armenian Cilicia tell us about the relationship between discourse and politics?

This dissertation diverges from reconstructions of political history and instead privileges the ideological currents that shaped politics in medieval Cilicia. Through textual analyses of

[5] Ի սոյն ամի թագաւորն Լեւոն հրամայեաց շինել ամրոց առ լեռամբն Տաւրոսի, հանդէպ քաջայաղթ զօրավարին Անդրէի պահարանիցն, կիսօրեայ ճանապարհաւ հեռի, ի պահպանութիւն այնմ գաւառին և հռչակաւոր ճանապարհին Խոզ ձորոյ: Որ և ի նոյն ամի յոր սկսաւ, կատարեաց զնա, և անուանեաց զնա Կատարեաց: Ի սոյն ամի մկրտեցին զորդի արքային ի մայրաքաղաքն ի Սիս, և ընկալաւ զնա յաւազանէն հայրապետն Ասորոց Իգնատիոս, և անուանեցաւ Թորոս, ըստ հօրեղբօրն իւրոյ անուան, որ սպանաւ յեգիպտացւոցն ի մարտ պատերազմին: Ի սոյն ամի մի ոմն ի ծառայիցն Ըռէտուարտին, որ եկեալ էր յայսկոյս ծովուն և էր ի յԱքքա, յաւուր միում մտեալ առ թագաւորն զի նստեալ էր առանձին բարակ պատմուճանաւ, և հանեալ զամենեսեան արտաքս զսպասաւորսն, և ինքն մատուցեալ առ ունկն թագաւորին, որպէս թէ ծածուկ բան ինչ ունի ասել, և հանեալ զդանակն եհար ի վերայ կրծից արքային, և թագաւորն ընդոստեաւ և զձեռն աջոյ ընդդէմ սրոյն տարեալ, և նա կրկնեալ զսուրն և եհար...: Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 254.

[6] For more on Prince Kostandin's baptism see Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 244.

contemporary Armenian chronicles, poetry, manuscript colophons, royal charters, and numismatics, the dissertation will follow the ways that kingship was conceived, articulated, and reimagined in Armenian Cilicia. Considering the density of the excerpt above, it would be beyond the scope of this project to accommodate every instance of such negotiation. Armenian Cilicia was exposed to political, religious, and cultural pressure virtually throughout its entire tenure as a political entity. However, over the course of this discussion, we will encounter distinct moments of transformation with regard to Armenian kingship. These transformations occurred at times when the kingship's previous articulation had grown too brittle or irrelevant to accommodate the political circumstances of the day. In the course of these adaptations to royal authority, moreover, we will see fundamental elements of previous iterations of kingship be discarded as their purchase on legitimacy diminished.

Armenian Kingship in Medieval Cilicia

The excerpt above, in all its chaotic splendor, only covers a single year in the life of the king. However, Armenian kingship as a concept spanned over three hundred years, outlasting even the Cilician kingdom itself. In all that time, the nature of royal authority developed within a dynamic and perilous context, where geopolitical circumstances assessed how far it could bend before breaking. Armenian Cilicia was established as a distinct political entity over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. During this time, Armenian aristocrats who were displaced by the Byzantine annexation and subsequent Seljuk invasion of the Armenian highlands in the eleventh century migrated to a region in the eastern Mediterranean, roughly corresponding to the confluence of Anatolia, Syria, and Mesopotamia. These émigrés then spent the ensuing decades

in a loosely delineated confederation, in which they simultaneously cooperated and competed against one another for supremacy. In pursuit of the latter goal, they frequently availed themselves of the advantages gained from allying with the other powers of the region, such as the Byzantines, the Zengids, and the Crusaders. One such nobleman, Lewon Ṛubenean, eventually succeeded in achieving this desired prominence by means of recognition as king of the Armenians from the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Byzantine Empire. The Pope's recognition, however, carried the caveat that the king, and by extension his kingdom, should be Catholic.[7] This pressure from Rome, along with the energetic activity of Franciscan and Dominican missionaries, sparked generations of tension within the kingdom between those amenable to Papal supremacy, and those who favored the ecclesiastical authority of the Armenian Catholicosate.

The mercurial political environment in Anatolia and the Levant caused by the coexistence of several principalities was disrupted once again by the establishment of the Mongol Empire as the regional hegemon in the thirteenth century. With Armenian Cilicia's voluntary submission to the Mongols following the latter's victory over the Seljuks in the 1243 battle of Köse Dağ, the kingdom entered a new phase of its existence. By becoming the Mongols' wardens on their Syrian frontier, Armenian Cilicia became embroiled in the generations-long wars between their imperial overlords and the newly established and formidable Mamluk Sultanate. Bearing the brunt of the sultanate's forays into Mongol territory gradually weakened Armenian Cilicia, in terms of its available manpower, financial wealth, and control over significant geopolitical territories. Additionally, the expansion of the Mamluks came, in large part, at the expense of the various crusader principalities that had been intermittent allies of Armenian Cilicia, further

[7] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, ed. K. A. Melik' Ohanjanyan (Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Ak'ademia, 1961), 156-157.

limiting the kingdom's diplomatic flexibility. Finally, with the dissolution of the Mongol Ilkhanate beginning in 1335, Cilicia was left without even the nominal protection of its overlord. This led to further concessions to the Mamluks and increased Papal influence in Cilicia.

It was during this period, under the reigns of Ōshin I and Lewon IV (c.a. 1307-1320 and 1320-1341, respectively), that Armenian Cilicia experienced a period of intrigue-inspired murders of its royal claimants. Following these purges, a Cypriot prince and staunch Catholic, Guy Lusignan, succeeded to the throne following Lewon's death in 1341. While Catholicism had made serious inroads into Cilician society over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Lusignan era is presented in the contemporary historiography as a period of particularly intense pressure to supplant the position of the Armenian Apostolic Church. This internal conflict reached a boiling point in 1344, when the king and his retainers were assassinated in an uprising by those favoring the Catholicate to the Papacy. As a result of this action, Cilicia became further isolated in the diplomatic sphere, leaving the kingdom as a tributary to the Mamluk sultanate. This state of affairs continued until 1375, when hostilities with the Mamluks were ignited once again, leading to the ultimate conquest of Armenian Cilicia and its annexation to the Mamluk sultanate. This dissertation spans the entirety of the lifespan of Armenian Cilicia as a political entity. Beginning in 1080, with the baronial era of intra-communal warfare and rebellion against Byzantine control, our discussion will take us beyond the fall of the Armenian kingdom to the year 1393. Even after the kingdom was conquered, discourse surrounding Armenian kingship continued, with the institution becoming relegated to a title only after the death of Cilicia's final king Lewon V.

Continuity versus Political Historiographies

These broad narrative strokes are the foundation upon which much of the past historiography on Armenian Cilicia has been constructed. In the following several pages, I will survey some key contributors in medieval Armenian historiography. While this survey is not intended to be exhaustive, it will point out some recurrent themes and methods, which this dissertation engages with critically. Beginning in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scholars, such as the Mkhitarist Armenian Catholic monks Mikʻayēl Chʻamchʻean and Ghewond Alishan, meticulously researched Armenian and non-Armenian primary sources to compile a series of Armenian national histories that were informed by their Armenian Catholic milieu.[8]

The enduring influence that these authors have had on modern Armenian historiography is truly remarkable. This political, elite, and religiously homogenous approach to Armenian history was reinforced by broader Western historiographic trends from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and continued to serve as the dominant template for historical inquiry of medieval Armenia. Despite the waves of historiographic trends that affected Soviet and Western scholarship respectively in the mid-twentieth century, historians from both traditions generally endeavored to recreate national histories with an emphasis on empiricism and philology.[9] Among

[8] See Ghewond Alishan, *Ḥushikkʻ Hayreneatsʻ Hayotsʻ,* 2 vols. (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1869); Ghewond Alishan, *Hayapatum*, 3 vols. (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1901). In addition to these broader national reconstructions, Ghewond Alishan also wrote more focused and region-specific histories that included geographic and topographic analyses. For example, see Ghewond Alishan, *Shirak* (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1881); Ghewond Alishan, *Sisuan* (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1885); Ghewond Alishan, *Ayrarat* (San Lazzaro, Venice,1890); Ghewond Alishan, *Sisakan* (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1893). For broader surveys on the works of Chʻamchʻean and Alishan see Kevork B. Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500–1920: With an Introductory History* (Wayne State University Press, 2000), 93, 116-118.

[9] That being said, the two schools did differ in perspectives. Depending on the various phases of Soviet historiography, scholars focused more or less on class consciousness and critiques of religious institutions. Western scholars, on the other hand, frequently produced works that reflected a view of medieval Armenia in general, and Armenian Cilicia in particular, as a crossroads of cultures. They also tended to privilege the role of diplomacy and hybridity with other regional powers in their analyses. However, there are exceptions and periodic overlap in styles and approaches in both cases.

For examples of works from the Soviet Union that adhere to this model, see Karen Yuzbashyan *Avarayri Chakatamartitsʻ Depi Nvarsaki Baymanagirĕ* (Yerevan State University, 1989); Lewon Khachikyan, *Pʻokʻr Haykʻi sotsʻialakan sharzhumneri patmutʻyunitsʻ (IV dar)* (Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakchʻutʻyun, 1951); Suren Eremyan,

the most prolific and impactful scholars from the Soviet Union interested in medieval Armenia and the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia is Hakob Manandyan.[10] Another foundational Soviet historian of medieval Armenia whose methods and approaches reflected his social environment was Ashot Hovhannisyan. His two-volume *Drvagner hay azatagrakan mtk'i patmut'yan* (*Episodes in the History of Armenian Liberation Thought*) similarly argues for the existence of an ongoing struggle for liberation among the Armenian people from the medieval until the modern eras.[11]

Contemporary Western scholarly conventions tended to complement their Soviet counterparts, at least in terms of their interest in political history. From the generation of scholars that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, Nicholas Adontz and Nersēs Akinean distinguish themselves as being particularly prolific and influential. Adontz's *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, originally published in Russian, continues to serve as the gold standard for questions relating to medieval Armenia's sociopolitical organization.[12] Nersēs Akinean's

Hayastanĕ ĕst "Ashkharats'uyts'"-i (P'ordz VII dari Haykakan k'artezi verakazmut'yan zhamanakits' k'artezagrakan himk'i Vra) (Haykakan SSṚ GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1963).

[10] See Hakob Manandyan, *K'nnakan Tesut'iwn Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmut'yan*, 3 vols. (Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Ak'ademia, 1960). This series covers the period between the migrations of peoples known as Armens to Armenia in the seventh century B.C. and the establishment of Safavid suzerainty over Iran in the sixteenth century. Over the course of his analysis there is an overarching theme of a millennia-long battle for national survival.

[11] See Ashot Hovhannisyan, *Drvagner hay azatagrakan mtk'i patmut'yan,* 3 vols. (Haykakan SSṚ GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1957). His text argues for the rise of dissenting intellectual movments as a result of theological and eschatological discourse merging with political ideology. Hovhannisyan, *Drvagner hay azatagrakan mtk'i patmut'yan*, vol. 1, (Haykakan SSṚ GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1957), 54. For more on Soviet Armenian scholars who focused on the urban and social histories of medieval Armenia and Cilicia see Hakob Manandyan, *O torgovle i gorodakh Armenii v sviazi s mirovoi torgovle drevnikh bremen (Vv. Do n. ery-XV v. n. ery)*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (Erevani Hamalsarani Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1954); Sen S. Arevshatyan and Artashes S. Mat'evosyan, *Gladzori hamalsaranĕ mijnadaryan Hayastani lusavorut'yan kentron* (Erevan, 1984); Lewon Khachikyan, "XIV-XV dareri haykakan gyughakan hamaynk'i masin," *Patmabanasirakan Handes* 1, (1958); Babken Aṛak'elyan, *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmut'yun* 8 vols. (Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Ak'ademia, 1967-1984); Lewon Babayan, *Drvakner Hayastani vagh feotalizmi darashrjani padmagrut'yun (V-VIII darer)* (Haykakan SSṚ GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1977); Sargis Boṛnazyan, *Sots'ial-tntesakan haraberut'yunnerĕ Kilikyan Haykakan petut'yunum XII-XIV darerum* (Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Ak'ademia, 1973).

[12] Nicholas Adontz, *Armeniia v epokhu Iustiniana: politicheskoe sostoianie na osnove nakhararskogo stroia* (St. Petersburg, 1908). The impact of this text was so great as to prompt future Armenological titan Nina Garsoïan to partially translate into English, edit, and republish the text. See Nicholas Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian:*

influence on medieval Armenian historiography is similarly remarkable. With his extensive training as a Mkhitarist Armenian Catholic monk in Vienna, he produced some of the most significant philological analyses of Armenian ecclesiastical history to date.[13] From the four twentieth-century scholars discussed above, in addition to their contemporaries, we see a pattern of framing Armenian history as a continuum. Whether it be ostensibly comprehensive or attributing modern movements to ideological antecedents from the distant past, these historians from the first half of the twentieth century tended to portray Armenian history as a continuous progression that reinforced their constructions of national identity by passing over ruptures and contradictions.

The momentum built by these medieval Armenian historians fueled a new cadre of scholars in the ensuing decades, such as Sirarpie Der Nersessian, Nina Garsoïan, and Cyril Toumanoff, to expand upon their efforts and transcend their fields. Der Nersessian, for example, used her expertise in Byzantine ecclesiastical art and architecture to successfully argue for the legitimacy of Armenian art as a topic of study in its own right.[14] Moreover, her broad survey of Armenian Cilician history, although written over 60 years ago, still functions as the most frequently referenced guides for medieval politics in Cilicia.[15] Nina Garsoïan's work on political and ecclesiastical history of medieval Armenia has likewise been foundational to modern

The Political Conditions Based on the Naxarar System, trans. With partial revision, bibliographical note, and appendices by Nina G. Garsoïan (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970).

[13] As the editor-in-chief to the *Handēs Amsōreay*, he fostered a forum for the leading Armenologists of the day to publish and engage with one another's research. For more on such Armenian periodicals see also *Bazmavep*, *Haigazian Armenological Review*, *Patma-Banasirakan Hantes*, *Revue des études Arméniennes.*

[14] Dickran Koyoumjian, "Sirarpie Der Nersessian (1896-1989): Pioneer of Armenian Art History," in *Medievalists and the Academy*, ed. Janice Chance (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 485.

[15] See Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia," in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 2, *The Later Crusades*, *1189-1311*, eds. Robert Lee Wolff and Harry W. Hazard (University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). For authors who continue to be influenced by Der Nersessian's work see Angus Donal Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks: War and Diplomacy during the Reigns of Het'um II (1289-1307)* (Brill, 2001); See also Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World: paradigms of Interaction, Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries, Volume II: Armenian Realpolitik in the Islamic World and Diverging Paradigms* (Transaction Publishers, 2013).

scholarship of this period. In addition to making the work of Nicholas Adontz accessible to a wider audience, Garsoïan's *Armenia Between Byzantium and the Sasanians* complicates and expands upon medieval Armenia's position between two empires. Rather than merely replicating the notion of buffer states being at the mercy of their imperial neighbors, Garsoïan envisions medieval Armenian political leaders as active participants in the perilous arena of inter-imperial diplomacy.[16] Taken as a unit, these scholars contributed to forging inroads with adjacent fields, such as Byzantine and Caucasian studies. While much of their work continued to reify the model of national coherence established by the previous generation, the relative multiplicity of both disciplines and sources consulted, with regard to languages resulted in political histories that were comparative and integrative.

The tradition of political reconstruction with regard to medieval Armenian, and especially Armenian Cilician, historiography continued well into the twenty-first century. For example, former President of the Republic of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan's two-volume series *Khachakirnerĕ ew Hayerĕ* (*The Crusaders and the Armenians*) is a rich study of political power in medieval Cilicia that covers the reigns of each of the principality's, and later kingdom's, rulers.[17] Angus Donal Stewart's contribution to the field has also been remarkable, in terms of new directions for future research. His monograph *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks*

[16] Nina Garsoïan, *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians* (Variorum Publishing, 1985). Cyril Toumanoff, in particular, has left a remarkable impact on the field of Armenian Studies. Not only does he highlight the interplay between secular and ecclesiastical authorizes in the creation of a unique regional theology, but he also presents the history of medieval Armenia as intrinsically entwined with that of Caucasian Albania, Iberia, as well as the Byzantine and Sassanian empires. See Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Georgetown University Press, 1963). In spite of their exclusion from this discussion, it should be noted that there has been a plethora of scholars that have worked to connect Armenian studies with the wider academic community. In particular, see Robert Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (University of Chicago Press, 2001); Robert W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History: The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles: The Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptation* (Clarendon Press, 1996); W.H. Rüdt-Collenberg, *The Rupenides, Hethumides and Lusignans: The Structure of the Armeno-Cilician Dynasties* (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1963); T.S.R. Boase, ed. *The Cilician Kingdom of Armenia* (Scottish Academic Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978).

[17] Levon Ter-Petrosyan, *Khach'akirnerĕ ew Hayerĕ* 2 vols. (Archive and Library of President Ter-Petrosyan Foundation, 2005-2007).

investigates the diplomatic relationship between the two kingdoms and complicates the generally adversarial impression found in modern historiography by highlighting moments of relative harmony and armistice.[18] More recently, Stewart's analysis of Armenian manuscript illuminator T'oros Roslin reflects a shift towards visual culture in scholarship of Armenian Cilicia, as will be discussed further below.[19]

Among the most influential historians of Armenian Cilicia from recent years is Claude Mutafian. His works on medieval history, both in French and in English, portray a political history of Cilicia that emphasizes its multidirectional diplomacy between the Byzantines, the Seljuks, the Mongols and the Crusaders.[20] Moreover, his works have expanded Armenian Studies by inviting a reconsideration of its boundaries.[21] By drawing attention to the Armenian heritage of Crusader rulers, such as the queens Morphia and Melisende of Jerusalem, Mutafian has challenged the state-centered and nationalist currents in medieval Armenian historiography. However, as will be discussed further below, his confidence in the stability of governmental institutions of Armenian Cilicia is misplaced. While he does identify various feudal structures that were adopted from the Crusaders, I argue that the primary sources instead highlight their rigidity and inability to hold against the pressure facing the kingdom.[22]

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[18] Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks*.
[19] Angus Donal Stewart, "Reframing the Mongols in 1260: The Armenians, the Mongols, and the Magi," *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 28, no. 1, (2018): 55-76.
[20] See Claude Mutafian, *Le Royaume Arménien de Cilicie, XIIe-XIV3 siècle* (CNRS Éditions, 1993); See also Claude Mutafian "The Brilliant Diplomacy of Cilician Armenia," in *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. Richard G. Hovnanian and Simon Payaslian (Mazda, 2008); See also, Claude Mutafian, "Cilician Armenian and Its Fifteen Peace Treaties (1185-1337)," *The Armenian Review* 52, nos. 1-4 (2010): 5-26; See also, Claude Mutafian, "Franciscains et Arméniens (XIII-XIV siècle)," *Studia Orientalia Chrsitiana*. *Collectanea* 32, no. 1 (1999): 247-252; See also Claude Mutafian, "Armenia's Response to the Crusades," *Hayagitakan usumnasirut'yunner* 4 (2013): 5-26; See also, Claude Mutafian, "La Place de l'Arménie cilicienne dans l'arménologie," in *Iran and the Caucasus* 10, no. 1 (2006): 7-16; See also, Claude Mutafian, "Hét'oum II, roi franciscain d'Arménie (1289-1307)," in *Byzance et ses périphéries (Mondes grec, balkanique et musulman)*, ed. Christophe Picard and Bernard Doumerc (Presses universitaires du Midi, 2004), 263-282.
[21] See for example, Mutafian, "La Place De L'arménie Cilicienne Dans L'arménologie".
[22] Mutafian, *Le Royaume Arménien de Cilicie: XIIe-XIVe siècle*, 46.

Over the past two centuries, scholarship on premodern Armenia, which began as a primordial national history that emphasized survival and continuity, has since taken on a variety of new directions. One such form, which this discussion has not yet touched upon is the proliferation of critical editions of many medieval Armenian sources. Due to their access to many of these texts in their original manuscript form, Soviet scholars applied their philological training to produce critical editions of many primary sources, whose quality and impact, in terms of democratizing knowledge, have been nothing short of revolutionary.[23] While elite political histories continue to be a mainstay of modern scholarship, there is much to be said for the focus on diplomacy as a means of integrating the field within a broader body of knowledge.[24]

Imaginaries of Armenian Kingship

As we embark on our discussion of kingship in Armenian Cilicia, let me first clarify how I am using the term Armenian kingship. What the Cilicians established in 1198 with Lewon's coronation is described in the primary sources as a renewal of the kingship that was practiced in the Armenian highlands. In the chronicle attributed to Smbat, for example, the event resulted in "great merriment for the Armenian people, for the resurrection and restoration of their rule in the

[23] See Movsēs Khorenatsʻi, *Hayotsʻ Patmutʻiwn*, critical Armenian text ed. M. Abeghyan and S. Harutʻyunyan, trans. Stepʻan Malkhasyan (Erevani Hamalsarani Hratarakchʻutʻyun, 1981); See also Tʻovma Artsruni and anonymous, *Patmutʻyun Artsrunyatsʻ tan,* trans. And ed. Vrezh Vardanyan (Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakchʻutʻyun, 1978).
While the majority of these critical editions were produced by Soviet scholars, this is not to say that there were no critical editions produced in the West. A particularly effective example is critical edition of the *Frik Diwan*. See Frik, *Diwan* ed. Archbishop Tirayr Melik-Mushkambarian (Armenian General Benevolent Union, 1952); See also the work of Robert Bedrosian. See, for example, Matthew of Edessa, *Matthew of Edessa's Chronicle*, trans. Robert Bedrosian, 3 vols. (Sophene, 2020-2023).

[24] The work of Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog is particularly emblematic of this approach. By focusing her analysis on the Mongols' diplomacy with the Armenians of the Armenian Highlands and the kingdom of Armenian Cilicia, she expands the scope of the Armenians' political activity to highlight their active role in the Mongol imperial apparatus. See Bayesian Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)* (Brill, 2010); For more on Armenian Cilicia's diplomacy in the Mediterranean sphere see Jacob Ghazaryan, *The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia During the Crusades*: *The Integration of the Cilician Armenians with the Latins 1080-1393*, (Routledge, 2015).

person of the benign and pious king Lewon."[25] The variety of kingship practiced in any polity is influenced, in large part, by its environment. That being said, the tradition of kingship practiced in the Armenia highlands bears revisiting briefly, as it was the institution that Lewon's coronation was meant to renew.

A kingdom of Armenia had existed in the Armenian highlands intermittently from the fourth century B.C. until its eventual annexation in the eleventh century. Over the centuries, there had been several dynasties that had called themselves *T'agawor Hayots'* (King of the Armenians), only to be replaced by another when the kingship was reinstated. Despite this periodic upheaval, one aspect of aristocratic life that remained was the nakharar system. Nicholas Adontz contends that, although the origins of the nakharars extend into pre-Armenian society, they only realized their final form in the fifth century during Arshakuni period.[26] Fundamentally, the nakharars were princely families who ruled their territories autonomously.[27] The autonomy of these families extended to judicial, administrative, and even military matters.[28] Robert Hewsen remarks on this broad latitude, writing, "…most appear to have been descended from the clan heads and tribal chiefs of old, tracing their positions and prerogatives to a period that antedated the monarchy and whose traditional rights were quite independent of it. The king, therefore was considered by the princes to be only the first among equals."[29]

This rough parity in strength and prestige between the nakharar families and the king can be seen in the contemporary primary sources as well. In the *History of the Armenians*, attributed

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[25] և եղեւ ուրախութիւն մեծ ազգիս հայոց, զի տեսին վերստին կանգնեալ և նորոգեալ զտէրութիւն իւրեանց յերեսս Լեւոնի բարեբարոյ և աստուածասէր արքայի: Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 208; For parallel depictions of renewal through the king's coronation see also Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 158; See also Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'* ed. Karapet Vardapet Shahnazareants' (Paris: E. Thunot et Cie, 1859), 215.
[26] Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, 165.
[27] Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian* 235-236.
[28] Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*, 74.
[29] Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*, 74.

to the mysterious P‘awstos Buzand, the author compares his nakharar patrons, the Mamikoneans, to the king of the Armenians several times, often highlighting their heroism and loyalty in the midst of royal deceit. In one episode of this history set in the fourth century A.D., the author writes about the return from Iranian captivity of a Manuēl Mamikonean to avenge the death of his brother Mushegh at the order of the Armenian king Varazdat. He writes that Manuēl returned to Armenia, at which time he named himself generalissimo (*sparapet)* of the Armenian armies without the king’s sanction, and wrote a hostile letter to the king.[30] In the letter Manuēl writes that the Mamikoneans are not the servants of the Arshakunis, but their peers, before going further to claim his own aristocratic seniority in relation to the king, whom he regarded as a bastard.[31] Finally, he challenges the king to single combat as a means of resolving their dispute.[32]

The scene summarized above highlights the lack of control that the king could exercise over his nobles in the nakharar system. Although Varazdat had used what he perceived as his royal prerogative to appoint a new *sparapet*, it was perceived as a transgressive enough act to demand a violent response. Following the scene of single combat, in which Manuēl is incidentally victorious, the armies of the two factions clash, with the Mamikonean side prevailing over the royal forces.[33] While the Mamikoneans were among the most powerful of the Armenian nakharar houses, encounters like that between Varazdat and Manuēl, nevertheless contribute to speculations regarding decentralized authority as an emblematic characteristic of Armenian kingship in the early medieval era.

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[30] P‘awstos Buzand, *P‘awstosi Buzandats‘woy Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘ i Ch‘ors Dprut‘iwn* (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1914), 247. There remains, to this day a spirited debate regarding the identity of this chronicle’s author, as well as the text’s year of composition and its original language. For more on this debate see Robert Bedrosian, “Translator’s Preface,” to P‘awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, trans. Robert Bedrosian (New York: Sources of the Armenian Tradition, 1985), accessed January 10, 2026, https://www.attalus.org/armenian/pbint.htm.
[31] P‘awstos Buzand, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 247.
[32] P‘awstos Buzand, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 247.
[33] P‘awstos Buzand, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 248.

A. Azfar Moin and Alan Strathern begin their landmark text Sacred Kingship in World History with the following definition of kingship: "Kingship, a form of politics in which a venerated leader is set apart from and above the group and imbued with extraordinary power (a power of life and death), has been for much of history, the default form of organization in societies large enough to sustain a state."[34] This interpretation, in large part, coheres with the tradition of Armenian kingship as practiced under the nakharar system. However, the setting apart of an individual to be imbued with extraordinary power, in this case, clashes with the king's apparent impotence in matters of life and death. Taking that into consideration, it is worth considering the source of the Armenian king's power, as its supremacy appears to be a product of aristocratic courtesy.

With the seeming inevitability of the nakharars as the regional arbiters of politics and administration, the kings of Armenia resolved the contradictions inherent in their rule by integrating the aristocrats within it. In order to shift the balance of power in his favor, the Armenian king bestowed lands, titles, and honors upon the most influential noble families in his domain. Court positions, such as the generalissimo (*sparapet*) or the royal coronant (*t'agadir)*, became associated with certain families, such that the positions became largely hereditary in practice. By having notable families, such as the Mamikoneans commanding the royal armies and the Bagratunis as the linchpins of coronation ceremonies, the king was able to frame the reality of his comparative weakness in such a way as to wed his legitimacy to that of his nominal vassals. Hewsen describes this process as the king "seeking to sanction what he could not otherwise control, saying, in effect, to the princes, who considered themselves sovereign that

[34] A.Azfar Moin and Alan Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History: Between Immanence and Transcendence," *Sacred Kingship in World History: Between Immanence and Transcendence*, ed. A. Azfar Moin and Alan Strathern (Columbia University Press, 2022), 1.

they were sovereign through his grace."[35] Regarding this system, Nicholas Adontz writes that it was so significant that "…no serious understanding or interpretation of Ancient Armenian life and history is possible without it."[36] Over the centuries, the various kingdoms of Armenia were conquered or otherwise destroyed, sometimes by the nakharars themselves.[37] But so long as the nakharar system remained intact, an Armenian kingdom with a similar administrative tradition and legitimacy could be reestablished, as was the case in the Bagratuni kingdom.

However, the nakharar system did eventually fade from relevance in Caucasia and Anatolia. While the downfall of this governmental style cannot be attributed to one single event, with successive invasions, such as those of the Arabs and the Seljuks, scholars tend to agree that the Mongol conquest of the region dealt the final blow to the nakharars.[38] This greatly hindered the task of resurrecting Armenian kingship in Cilicia. Without the nakharar system to both materially support and ideologically legitimize the king's rule, the Cilician kings were left to construct a new imaginary of Armenian kingship. Various scholars, such as Claude Mutafian, seem to have taken the stability of the Armenian royal imaginary for granted. Mutafian's work stands as one of the pillars of modern historiography of Armenian Cilicia. His work, available in French, English, and Armenian brings the diplomatic and political activities of Armenian Cilicia into conversation with the established and conventional scholarship on the crusades and the eastern Mediterranean. In doing so, he has revealed not only Cilicia, but also Armenians of the broader Mediterranean, to have been integral political actors in both the successes and setbacks

[35] Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*, 74.
[36] Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, 165.
[37] Movsēs Khorenats'i, *Hayots' Patmut'iwn*, 431-435.
[38] Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, 166; For a detailed analysis of the Mongols' effects on the nakharar system see also Robert Gregory Bedrosian, "The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13-14th Centuries" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1979).

of the crusades, in addition to being robust contributors to the material culture of the premodern Levant.[39]

In his landmark book *Le Royaume Arménien de Cilicie* Mutafian analyzes Armenian Cilician politics, while also presenting a visual survey of art and architecture from the kingdom. In the course of his discussion, however, he interprets Lewon I's innovations in governance as markers of centralization.[40] In particular, Mutafian references the following decisions by Lewon: filling important government posts with Franks, encouraging the Latin ecclesiastical presence in Tarsus and Mamistra, reinforcing diplomatic ties with chivalric orders, such as the Knights Hospitaller, introducing French titles into his nobility and army, adopting Frankish legal codes, and granting privileges to European merchants.[41]

Rather than serving as a means of centralization, Mutafian's list seems to draw more attention to Lewon's increasing dependency on and subordination to the Latin world to secure his position. While Lewon set himself apart from his rivals, he did so by means of ceding power and authority to the Frankish factions around Cilicia. The withdrawal of Latin support for any reason, would have nullified Lewon's relative power. The implications of this crisis on Armenian kinship in Cilicia will be discussed below in Chapter 2 as Lewon's daughter loses this very support, leading to the outbreak of war and the usurpation of the Cilician throne. Moreover, considering that Armenian kingship had, up until this point, relied on delegating authority in an interdependent network of alliances between the nobility and royalty under the nakharar system, Mutafian's assertion overlooks Lewon's undermining of this convention in his bid to revive the

[39] See Claude Mutafian, *L'Armenie du Levant (XIe-XIVe Siecle) Diriger En Grece et a Rome*, 2 vols. (Societe d'edition Les Belles Lettres, 2012); See also Claude Mutafian and Éric Van Lauwe, *Atlas historique et cutlurel de l'Arménie: Proche-Oreint et Sud-Caucase du 8 e- 20e siècle* (Autrement, 2001).
[40] Mutafian, *Le Royaume Arménien de Cilicie: XIIe-XIVe siècle*, 36.
[41] Mutafian, *Le Royaume Arménien de Cilicie: XIIe-XIVe siècle*, 36.

kingship. Additionally, while the translation of the *Assizes of Antioch* into Armenian suggests a strong interest in adopting it as a law code, there is no clear indication of its usage in Cilician society.[42] An Armenian lawcode already existed at this time in the form of Mkhitar Gosh's *Datastanagirk'* that addresses many temporal matters, in addition to theological.[43] So it is not clear in what way this innovation was meant to centralize rule in Cilicia.

Finally, Lewon's reign did see the use of French titles in the administration and the military. Among the princes present at his coronation, the chronicle attributed to Smbat identifies a Marshal and a Constable, in addition to a Frankish lord who is made a Seneschal later. Chris MacEvitt has addressed the question of titles with regard to the administration of a Crusader Kingdom. He argues against any real significance to the continuous use of French noble titles, beyond the continued use of Latin aristocratic vocabulary.[44] He writes, "Given the region's history, it is as likely, if not more so, that Byzantine or Armenian notions of organizing political, judicial and military authority prevailed."[45] But the impact of these titles as a Mediterranean recreation of the nakharar system seems insignificant. The first major characteristic that contributed to the perpetuation of the nakharar system was the broad autonomy of the lords. The other major aspect was the bestowal of the nakharars' court titles along hereditary lines. Yet, the only noble houses that are continuously mentioned in the chronicles as exercising such dynastic power are the Ṛubeneans, the Het'umeans, and their respective cadet branches. As a result of this, there was no institutionalization for Lewon's kingship, as families could not bring their power and prestige to bear, which would have been nurtured over the course of generations. This

[42] Robert W. Thomson, "From Theology to Law: Creating an Armenian Secular Law Code," in *Legalism: Community and Justice*, ed. Fernanda Pirie and Judith Scheele (Oxford University Press, 2014), 42.
[43] Mxit'ar Goš, *The Lawcode [Datastanagirk'] of Mxit'ar Goš*, trans. by Robert W. Thomson (Rodopi, 2000).
[44] Christopher MacEvitt, "What Was Crusader about the Crusader States?" *al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 30, no. 3 (2018): 325.
[45] MacEvitt, "What was Crusader About Crusader Sates?" 325.

institutional power would have been necessary in the Armenian case, and its absence put an unprecedented degree of pressure on the king to maintain the stability of his kingdom without the benefit of delegating authority.

All this is to say that Armenian kingship in Cilicia divorced from the nakharar system lacked more than centralization. It lacked ideological and institutional stability. The chronicle attributed to Smbat, as well as that of Jean Dardel and others, provide ample evidence of rebellions and uprisings that would challenge any claims of centralization and control.[46] However, what we also see over the course of two centuries of Armenian kingship in Cilicia is its consistent engagement with, and reshaping of, the ideas of royal authority that it encountered as a node in a network at the intersection of the Mediterranean and Eurasia. Through this engagement, the Armenian imaginary of kingship periodically shifted to best survive and flourish in its contemporary circumstances. My dissertation will intervene in this rich historiography of Armenian Cilicia by providing a history of the imaginary of Armenian kingship, along with its reimagining.

Negotiated Authority in Armenian Studies

Recent scholarship has identified the issue with insularity in Armenian Studies discussed earlier and has begun producing more generative and integrative work. Rather than explicitly on moments of oppression, scholars have highlighted moments, in which Armenians secured their existence and participated in broader regional, and often even global, networks. In the field of

[46] See Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 223-224, 227; See also Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'* [Chronicle of the Armenians]. Translated and published by K. Ezeants', (St. Petersburg: Skorokhodov Publishing House, 1891), 43.

medieval literature, for example, Armenian lyric and epic poetry, as well as theological texts, such as martyrologies and polemics, have been put in conversation with their counterparts from the Persian, Turkish, Latin, and Greek traditions, among others. Peter Cowe is a leading voice in this scholarly shift. His "The Politics of Poetics: Islamic Influence on Armenian Verse," is particularly compelling in this discussion. In the article, Cowe identifies the ways that medieval writers in Anatolia not only adopted, but also adapted literary tropes and styles that had gained particular currency in their respective cultural and political spheres of influence.[47] Through his analysis we see popular Persian poetics, such as the nightingale and rose, becoming "indigenized" in the work of Kostandin Erznkats'i to connote the pursuit of the divine beloved, represented in this case by Jesus Christ.[48] Through his discussion of this process, Cowe argues that poetic choices were not only about aesthetic preferences, but were also a response to the prevailing political and cultural influences of the time.[49]

The notion that poetic styles could be used as a means of negotiating status in a broader Islamicate environment has had a significant impact on the development of this project. My dissertation extends Cowe's argument from the literary sphere to the political. In doing so, it argues for a similar process of mediation taking place in Armenian Cilicia. In the ensuing

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[47] S. Peter Cowe, "The Politics of Poetics: Islamic Influence on Armenian Verse," in *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East Since the Rise of Islam,* eds. J. J. van Hinkel, H. L. Murre-van den Berg, and Theo Maarten van Lint (Peeters Publishers, 2005).
For more on shared literary currents see Alex MacFarlane, "The City of Brass and Alexander's Narrow Grave: Translation and Commentary of Kafas Added to Manuscript M7709 (Part 1)," *Iran and the Caucasus* 25, no. 4 (2021); Alex MacFarlane, "The City of Brass and Alexander's Narrow Grave: Translation and Commentary of Kafas added to Manuscript M7709 (Part 2)," *Iran and the Caucasus* 26, no. 4 (2022); Alex MacFarlane, "The City of Brass and Alexander's Narrow Grave: Translation and Commentary of Kafas added to Manuscript M7709 (Part 3)," *Iran and the Caucasus* 27, no. 3 (2023); See also Theo Maarten van Lint, "Among Others: Greek in Context in the Letters of Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni (eleventh century)," in *Greek Texts and Armenian Traditions: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, eds. Francesca Gazzano, Lara Pagani, Giusto Traina (De Gruyter, 2016).
[48] Cowe, "The Politics of Poetics," 390-391; For more on such analysis showing the cultural currency of various regional languages in Anatolia poetry see Andrzej Pisowicz, "How Did New Persian and Arabic Words Penetrate the Middle Armenian Vocabulary? Remarks on the Poetry of Kostandin Erznkac'i's Poetry," in *New Approaches to Medieval Armenian Language and Literature*, ed. J. J. S. Weitenberg (Rodopi, 1995).
[49] Cowe, "The Politics of Poetics," 388-389, 399.

chapters, we will see royal interlocutors in Armenian Cilicia participating in the prevailing discourses of power in both the Mediterranean and Eurasia. As moments of historical change—such as the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century—see these two major networks collide, my dissertation will position Armenian Cilicia as a unique space where modes of kingship from both zones become adopted, adapted, and announced.

Cowe's discussion of poetic trends in Armenian literature is invaluable in conceptualizing the hierarchical arrangements that affected cultural production. More recently, Michael Pifer's *Kindred Voices* has recalibrated scholarship of medieval Armenian poetry by situating it within a broad regional literary corpus.[50] By reading Armenian poetry in tandem with its Persian and Turkish counterparts, Pifer highlights moments of intertextual dialogue, and in so doing, argues for the existence of wider Anatolian poetics and aesthetics shared by all three traditions.[51] Through this process, he is able to disentangle literary constructs and tropes from any particular linguistic tradition, thus restructuring nationalist perceptions of belonging as a whole.[52] Pifer's approach has enriched my dissertation significantly through the exploration of the circulatory and dialogic aspects in the Anatolian literary landscape. By emphasizing medieval writers reinforcement of communal boundaries through the counterintuitive medium of widely circulated and recognizable poetic conventions, Pifer refines the concept of a shared cultural landscape. Similarly, the coming chapters will approach Armenian Cilicia's expressions of kingship through the framework of a shared vocabulary of power and legitimacy. However, the dissertation expands upon this notion of a shared discourse by establishing Cilicia as a node in

[50] Michael Pifer, *Kindred Voices: A Literary History of Medieval Anatolia* (Yale University Press, 2021); for more on medieval literature and instances of overlap and correspondence see also Tamar Boyadjian's *The City Lament: Jerusalem across the Medieval Mediterranean* (Cornell University Press, 2018).
[51] Pifer, *Kindred Voices,* 14.
[52] Pifer, *Kindred Voices,* 10-11.

multiple networks, attempting to negotiate its authority in a manner that would be legible and palatable to them all.[53]

Armenian Studies has also experienced similar developments in historiography that propose an integrated approach to medieval Anatolian society. Rachel Goshgarian for example, explores the development of shared understandings of urban masculinity in Anatolia through the formation of fraternal youth orders.[54] While the proliferation of *futuwwa* literature and fraternal lodges are commonly associated with the development of Muslim youth culture within the cities of late Seljuk and early Ottoman Anatolia, Goshgarian discusses the translation of such literature into Armenian and the composition of two original treatises on the subject by the thirteenth-century Armenian writer Ḥovhannēs Erznkatsʻi.[55] Such investigations once again complicate the image of segregated ethno-religious communities, such as Armenians, whose cultures and values developed independently and in spite of imperial pressures. Whether it be through the study of

[53] The work of art historians and archaeologists on the topic of the mobility, legibility, and fluidity of Armenian kingship has been very formative in the development of this project. Their methods in approaching the topic are quite revealing in terms of the impact of visual culture on conveying authority. In particular Antony Eastmond's *Tamta's World: The Life and Encounters of a Medieval Noblewoman from the Middle East to Mongolia* (Cambridge University Press, 2017); Michele Bacci, "An Introductory Essay: Mediterranean Perspectives on Royal Images," in *Meanings and Functions of the Ruler's Image in the Mediterranean World (11th-15th Centuries)* eds. Michele Bacci and Manuela Studer-Karlan (Brill, 2022); Gohar Grigoryan-Savary, "Royal Images and Coronation Celebrations in the Sermons of Ḥovhannēs Pluz Erznkacʻi," in *Meanings and Functions of the Ruler's Image in the Mediterranean World (11th-15th Centuries)* eds. Michele Bacci and Manuela Studer-Karlen (Brill, 2022); Ioanna Rapti, "Beyond the Page: Royal Imagery in the Queen Keŕan Gospels and the Rhetoric of the Court in Armenian Cilicia" in *Meanings and Functions of the Ruler's Image in the Mediterranean World (11th-15th Centuries)* eds. Michele Bacci and Manuela Studer-Karlan (Brill, 2022); Edda Vardanyan, "The Royal Portrait in the Hetʻum Lectionary (1286) and the Genealogy of Christ in the Art and Ideology of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia" in *Meanings and Functions of the Ruler's Image in the Mediterranean World (11th-15th Centuries)* eds. Michele Bacci and Manuela Studer-Karlan (Brill, 2022); See also Kate Franklin, *Everyday Cosmopolitanisms: Living the Silk Road in Medieval Armenia* (University of California Press, 2021).

[54] Rachel Goshgarian, "Opening and Closing: Coexistence and Competition in Associations Based on *Futuwwa* in Late Medieval Anatolian Cities," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 1 (2013). See also Rachel Goshgarian, "Armenian Texts on *Futuwwa*: Contextualizing the Ambiguities, Hybridities, and Porosities in the Construction of the 'Ideal' Man in Late Medieval Anatolia in the Work of Ḥovhannēs of Erzinjan," in *Javanmardi: the Ethics and Practice of Persianate Perfection*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Gingko Library, 2018).

[55] Goshgarian, "Armenian Texts on *Futuwwa*," 183, 194.

literature or social organizations, recent scholarship has envisioned an interconnected and dialogic cultural environment that has brought into focus the lives of medieval Armenians.

Sergio La Porta's works on the negotiated existence of medieval Armenians are likewise crucial to this dissertation's guiding questions.[56] For example, in his "Armeno Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century," La Porta highlights the distinctions among Armenian Cilicians and their Caucasian counterparts in the reception of Catholic missionaries.[57] In doing so, he also follows the development of strategies that proponents of the Armenian Apostolic Church employed in order to combat the growing influence of Franciscan and Dominican missionaries in the area.[58] La Porta argues that, in the process of countering the arguments and theologies circulated by the missionaries, the Apostolic faction incidentally consolidated its own theological and intellectual tradition.[59] Similarly, this dissertation sees Armenian kingship developing through its contacts and engagement with several forms of authority, both spiritual and temporal. The mediations of formidable influences, such as the Papacy and the Mongol Khans, as well as considerations of internal forces, all contributed to the crystallization of a royal ideology. In addition to outlining the source and aesthetics of royal authority, these negotiations also defined the limits of that authority by relativizing it to these larger, transregional powers. Moreover, the periodic transformations of Armenian kingship instigated by various interlocutors in the Cilician period emphasize their active participation in a dynamic political landscape.

In a similar vein, there are several scholars whose works, even if beyond Armenian Studies, have nevertheless left a significant mark on the field. Sara Nur Yıldız is one such, who,

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[56] See Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)*; see also Zohrab Gevorgyan, *The Armenian State of Cilicia in the Mediterranean Trade System (13th-14th Centuries)* (Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences, 2015).
[57] Sergio La Porta, "Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century: Scholarly Tradition in Conversation and Competition," *Medieval Encounters* 21, no. 2-3 (2015).
[58] La Porta, "Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century," 284-293.
[59] La Porta, "Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century," 273-274.

although an expert in the history of Anatolia during the reign of the Seljuks and the Ilkhans, has crossed over into Armenian Studies and enriched it as a result. Her article "Reconceptualizing the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier," for example, challenges previously held notions on the political landscape in southern Anatolia as a rigid binary.[60] She does this by highlighting the autonomy of the Karamanids as a defining factor in their attacks on Armenian Cilicia.[61] By arguing against a unified Seljuk-Karaman front on the Cilician frontier, she proposes a new understanding of the region, in which alliances and other political priorities were dynamic, fluid, and shifting.[62]

Christopher MacEvitt is another scholar whose work has been particularly influential in testing the boundaries between various fields of study. As a historian of the crusades, MacEvitt has complicated the traditional dichotomy of a Christian West set against a Muslim East. In his book *The Crusades and the Christian World East: Rough Tolerance*, MacEvitt follows the policies of governance that the Crusaders pursued to effectively rule over their eastern Christian subjects. Over the course of his analysis, MacEvitt argues for the Franks' policy of "Rough Tolerance," which "allowed the coexistence of diverse religious and ethnic communities without the legal or social structures of control or domination that were emerging in Latin Europe; it was 'rough' because political power rested largely in the hands of the new Frankish aristocracy, who employed it against indigenous communities as they felt necessary."[63] This coexistence stemmed from the suspension of various sectarian divides that would have otherwise seriously

[60] Sara Nur Yıldız, "Reconceptualizing the Seljuk–Cilician Frontier: Armenians, Latins, and Turks in Conflict and Alliance during the Early Thirteenth Century," in *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); For a more detailed exploration of a shared artistic vocabulary in Anatolia that transcended confessional boundaries see also A.C.S. Peacock, Bruno De Nicola, and Sara Nur Yıldız, eds., *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate; reprint, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).
[61] Yıldız, "Reconceptualizing the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier" 115-117.
[62] Yıldız, "Reconceptualizing the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier," 117.
[63] Christopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 21.

hindered their interconfessional cooperation, and the employment of eastern Christians in various positions of their government.[64] MacEvitt's scholarship has meaningfully impacted my own investigation of Armenian kingship because of how closely the Ṛubeneans' pursuit of royal status parallels those of the Crusaders, especially Count Baldwin of Edessa. Baldwin's decision to uphold and incorporate much of the existing power structures, including the personnel operating them, into his rule, while also maintaining a vague confessional boundary between himself and his subjects, mirrors the Ṛubeneans' courting of Papal support. Over the course of the twelfth century, the Ṛubeneans bolstered their ranks with Latin soldiers and marriage alliances and flirted with submission to the Pope. Rather than attempting to secure their position by means of winning the support of the inhabitants of the land they ruled through the blurring of boundaries between them, this policy suggests that the Ṛubeneans sought to triumph over their local enemies by offering to the Latins the very legitimacy they were searching for. This results in an inversion of Baldwin's course, by which Prince Lewon II is able to suspend doctrinal differences between the Armenians and Franks to achieve his royal status.

One of the major consequences of the political and national histories of the past two centuries is the development of a perception of Armenian kingship as a stable imaginary. Ideas surrounding what Armenian kingship entailed, in terms of the source, aesthetics, and performative markers of royal authority and legitimacy, have often been taken for granted. One of the goals of this dissertation is to challenge this paradigm by highlighting moments of rupture and refashioning of Armenian kingship as it was conceived in Cilicia. Alison Vacca's work has done a great deal to complicate such stable imaginaries. Her *Non-Muslims Provinces Under Early Islam*, follows, the active process by which rulers in the Armenian highlands articulated

[64] MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East*, 21.

their kingship and expressed their legitimacy in relation to the enduring discourses of power from the Sasanian era in a new caliphate context, highlighting the dynamism of such discourses in the process.[65] Moreover, Vacca's academic interventions transcend the field of Armenian Studies and disturb the hegemonic frames that guide academic work. In her "Past the Mediterranean and Iran," Vacca challenges the flexibility of the Mediterranean as an analytical category, suggesting that it might lead to the reproduction of static impressions of medieval Armenians in modern historiography.[66]

Instead, she invites the use of Islamic frontiers as a means of bridging various fields of study together.[67] Her framing of the Islamic frontier provides a very useful analogue for thinking about Armenian kingship in Cilicia as a product of overlapping Eurasian and Mediterranean frontier negotiations without reducing the process to an East versus West dynamic.

Framings for Reimagining Armenian Kingship in Cilicia

In the foundational days of Armenian hegemony in Cilicia, the political arena was at its most competitive. Because kingship had not yet been established, several noble families, as well as the clergy, vied for power through diplomatic and military means, contributing to a general lack of political stability and unity in the region. As these various factions clashed with one another, contenders for supreme authority sought ideological means to enhance their tangible

[65] Alison Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenian and Caucasian Albania* (Cambridge University Press, 2017); The idea of articulating kingship in relation to the prevailing discourses of power in an Abbasid context has also been discussed in Christina Maranci, *Armenian Art: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[66] Alison Vacca, "Past the Mediterranean and Iran: A Comparative Study of Armenia as an Islamic Frontier, First/Seventh to Fifth/Eleventh Centuries," in *An Armenian Mediterranean: Words and Worlds in Motion*, eds. Kathryn Babayan, Michael Pifer (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
[67] Vacca, "Past the Mediterranean and Iran," 40.

victories while simultaneously discrediting their rivals'. The foremost of these strategies for advocacy was the construction and use of prestigious genealogies. The first chapter of this dissertation explores this formative era of Armenian kingship in Cilicia, and asks the question, How do the eschatological narratives of post-Bagratuni Armenian writers illuminate the ways political discourse shaped, legitimized, and sacralized kingship?

While contemplating these questions, the discussion will reckon with the often-overlooked point that the struggle for political power did not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it was integrated within a tapestry, woven together by manifold interests, anxieties, and concerns from a variety of people in Cilicia. Proclaiming descent from a particularly revered ruler was a tried and tested method to establish legitimacy, as it helped to connect one's own ascendancy with the prosperity of their putative ancestor. However, taken in the context of the large-scale destruction and displacement following the Seljuk fallout, we will see genealogy employed to answer more ominous questions than those concerned with dynastic continuity. The collapse of imperial authority in Anatolia and its accompanying societal upheaval coincided with an escalation of eschatological literature, concerned with prophecy and the end times. It is in response to this apprehension that genealogical arguments make their most significant impact. Connecting genealogical legitimacy to salvific prophecy and an imminent apocalypse, prospective rulers crafted an Armenian kingship that approached the divine. Throughout the course of this discussion, the work of Moin and Strathern on the ubiquity and variety of sacred kingships throughout world history will be of particular relevance. By beginning our exploration in the chaotic and violent backdrop of intra-communal competition, we will see how the Ṛubenean rulers of Cilicia moved along the continuum between immanentist kingship to transcendentalist kingship.

Sacred kingship, however, would not be a permanent condition for the kings of Armenian Cilicia. Following his recognition as king of the Armenians by both the Pope and the Byzantine Emperor, Lewon I of the Ṛubenean dynasty was left with the nettlesome issue of finding a suitable heir. Because he lacked a son, he chose his young daughter Zapēl to be his successor. In the second chapter we will see Armenian kingship transform in answer to these circumstances. Lewon's choice suggested that a succession crisis would be inevitable. His death did indeed introduce a power vacuum that embroiled the kingdom in a brief, but bloody, civil war. At its conclusion we will see Armenian kingship contend with the relatively unprecedented situation of a female ruler by dividing royal authority among those who would perform the various roles previously embodied by Lewon I. As the dust settled, a loose triarchy emerged with an active, zealous king, a passive, doctrinal queen, and a regent to see to the administrative concerns of the kingdom. Over the course of this second chapter, we will see a reversal in the consolidated model of kingship pursued by Lewon to one of greater decentralization and specialization. As we encounter these figures, this chapter will ask the question, "What was the purpose behind distributing royal power among these three people when addressing the issues of the kingdom's political instability?"

Relatively soon after this distribution of power, we will see the Armenian kingship reimagined, yet again with the arrival of the Mongols to the Mediterranean in Chapter Three. Having secured his position in the years following his marriage to Zapēl, Het'um I journeyed to the Mongol capital to finalize the terms of his relationship with the Mongol Empire. His eventual incorporation into the Mongol Empire would transform his kingship in several ways. First, it would rehabilitate the Mongols in the primary sources from an apocalyptic army of wolves to a force of divine wrath. Due to the relative mercy shown to Armenian Cilicia, as well as the

Mongols' wars against Het'um's rivals and Hulagu Khan's perceived preference for Christianity, the Mongols would become integrated within an Armenian cosmology.

This chapter has developed in conversation with Jonathan Brack's *An Afterlife for the Khan*, and in particular his attention to the conversion strategies employed by religious mediators in the Mongol Ilkhanid court.[68] In the course of this chapter, we will similarly encounter Armenian theologians, namely the thirteenth-century polymath Vardan Arewelts'i, navigating their own conversion efforts by recasting the familiar Mongol imperial ideology along Armenian Christian lines. The chapter also engages with the effects of this strategy on Het'um's kingship. Despite the cordial relations between the king and Khan, serving as a subject of a non-Christian empire presented certain obstacles in justifying the Armenian king's vassalage. A review of the contemporary primary sources will reveal how Armenian writers resolved this issue through the use of strategic ambiguities that blurred the power dynamics of Armenian Cilicia's relationship with the Mongol Empire.

Armenian Cilicia's experience as a Mongol vassal and frontier warden contributed to the kingdom's progressively increasing commitment to a seemingly never-ending stalemate against the Mamluk sultanate of Egypt. The stalemate finally ended in the middle of the fourteenth century with the ebbing of the Mongol wave, resulting in an isolated Cilician kingdom with rapidly deteriorating prospects for survival. The vacuum created by the Mongols' withdrawal saw Armenian Cilicia shift once again to the Latin world to salvage its rapidly deteriorating prospects for survival. This resulted in another reimagining of Armenian kingship that would fracture the pillars supporting kingdom. The reliance on Latin assistance led to the inheritance of the Cilician throne by the Frankish Lusignans of Cyprus in 1342. In the final chapter of this

[68] Jonathan Z. Brack, *An Afterlife for the Khan: Muslims, Buddhists, and Sacred Kingship in Mongol Iran and Eurasia* (University of California Press, 2023), 93.

dissertation, we encounter a new style of historiography that frames Armenian kingship along Latin, Catholic, and Mediterranean lines. As a result of this reimagining, considerations for the Armenian Catholicos and aristocracy lost all purchase as legitimatizing elements of Armenian kingship. Finally, with the fall of the kingdom and the exile of its deposed king, we will encounter a new era in which kingship continues to transform in new localized contexts.

Chapter 1 Genealogy Wars: Competing Lineages on the Path to Armenian Kingship

1.1 Introduction

The ascendancy of an Armenian martial nobility in Cilicia during the eleventh and twelfth centuries was a process that took place within a dynamic social and political environment. The Ṛubeneans temporarily succeeded in securing regional preeminence through their diplomatic wiles and ruthless militarism, culminating with the coronation of Prince Lewon II as Lewon I King of the Armenians in 1198. But this pursuit of power took place in the midst of an intellectual trend toward apocalypticism and rejuvenation. Anatolia in general, and its Armenians in particular, witnessed a societal cataclysm in the decades preceding the establishment of Cilician Armenia. The displacement of Armenians from the Armenian highlands resulting from the region's annexation by the Byzantine Empire was dramatically exacerbated by the invasion of the Seljuks into the region. This turmoil was transformed, however, by the opportunities that the advent of the crusades presented the beleaguered Armenians in the eastern Mediterranean.

These upheavals provided the cosmological mortar for the rulers of Cilicia to transform the nature of their authority from warlordism to sacred kingship. While Armenian writers ruminated on the end times and the fulfillment of prophecy, Armenian rulers frequently responded by working to secure a place within this eschatological milieu. One of the most significant aspects of this endeavor was the preoccupation of both writers and rulers with prestigious genealogies as a pathway to kingship. The chapter draws on Armenian prophetic apocrypha and court chronicles to answer the following questions: How did the competing apocalyptic genealogies that

circulated among Armenian writers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries shape the forms of royal authority that were emerging in Armenian Cilicia? What can these genealogies tell us about the role of discourse in the formation of sacred kingship?

The presence of the Armenian nobility in Cilicia is often portrayed as the continuation of one particular genealogical line or another. For example, the Het‘umeans are portrayed as descendants of the Artsrunis and the Ṛubeneans as the descendants of the Bagratunis.[69] Regardless of the reality of such claims, these families are relegated to the peripheries of the Armenian primary sources until they secure their respective positions. By the time the sources introduce the Het‘umeans and Ṛubeneans, there was already an established Armenian military aristocracy in the northwestern Levant dating back to the occupation of the region in the eleventh century by the renegade Byzantine general Philaretos.[70] Following his death and the splintering of his domains, a new generation of Armenian military leaders emerged, such as Kostandin of Kaṛkaṛ and Gogh Vasil (“Vasil the Brigand”).[71] It is from this political landscape that the lords of Cilicia emerge as leaders, and it is, in part, from reducing these successors of Philaretos that they gain their formidable reputation and holdings.[72] The various power players in Cilicia then attempted to leverage the momentary prominence they achieved through their warlordism to build political capital and legitimacy in the eyes of their support bases by associating their respective rules with the particular dynasties mentioned above. This genealogically inspired legitimacy was ideologically critical to the Cilician barons’ political aspirations as it promised

[69] For the genealogy of the Het‘umeans see Samuēli K‘ahanay Anets‘i, *Hawak‘uvmnk‘i Grots‘ Patmagrats‘ Ḥaghags Giwti Zhamanakats‘ Ants‘elots‘ Minjew Nerkays*, ed. by Arshak Tēr Mik‘ayelean (S. Ejmiatsin Tparan, 1892); For the genealogy of the Ṛubeneans see, Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut‘iwn Ṛubeneants‘*.
[70] Philaretos Brachiamos was an eleventh century Byzantine military leader who conquered a significant amount of territory in the Levant, and whom Mathew of Edessa identifies as Armenian “through his father and mother;” See Matt‘ēos Uṛhayets‘i, *Zhamanakagrut‘iwn* (Mayr At‘oṛ Srboy Ējmiatsni, 1898), 206-11.
[71] For more on Kostandin, Matt‘ēos Uṛhayets‘i, *Zhamanakagrut‘iwn*, 260; on Gogh Vasil, Matt‘ēos Uṛhayets‘i, *Zhamanakagrut‘iwn*, 293.
[72] Matt‘ēos Uṛhayets‘i, *Zhamanakagrut‘iwn*, 269.

their war-weary constituents both a sense of stability and security. By associating themselves with previous dynasties, prospective rulers could guarantee their supporters a sense of continuity with a bygone era of prosperity. Moreover, by attaching oneself to a genealogy associated with prophesied rejuvenation, a prospective ruler could advocate for his pretension by highlighting its cosmic inevitability.

1.2 Royal Authority in an Eschatological Milieu

Although kingship in Cilician Armenia would not become a reality until 1198, it is important to note that the genealogical discourse that contributed to its realization had begun over a century before in the crucible of the Seljuk invasion of Anatolia. Beginning with the Byzantine annexation of the Bagratuni capital of Ani in 1045 and continuing with its subsequent fall to the Seljuks following the battle of Manzikert in 1071, contemporary Armenian sources saw a flowering of eschatological thought. This practice follows the Byzantine tradition of "blind dating," by which the end times are heralded by natural phenomena or human events.[73] The shock of such a fundamental societal upheaval, in addition to the amazing degree of violence visited upon the local populations of eastern Anatolia, also imbued this flowering with a retrospective character. Armenian writers from this era showed a great interest in works produced during the fifth century—a period popularly referred to as the Armenian Golden Age. The reason for this appellation is that the fifth century is marked by the creation of the Armenian alphabet and the production of a plethora of translated and independent works. In particular, writers from the post-Manzikert fallout were interested in works concerned with the lives of

[73] Paul Magdalino, "The Year 1000 in Byzantium," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. Paul Magdalino, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002), 233-270, 239-240.

Armenia's rulers and patriarchs. These biographies frequently covered rulers from the fourth and fifth centuries, a period coinciding with the Christianization of Armenia and the partition and later annexation of the Arshakuni kingdom.

The particular texts at issue, which gave rise to generations of apocalyptic discourse, are the apocryphal *Vision of St. Nersēs* and the *Vision of St. Sahak*. Both saints served as the Catholicoi of the Armenian Church during the years immediately following the Armenian kingdom's conversion to Christianity in the fourth century. As a result, they carried the prestigious distinction of shepherding the kingdom through its transitionary period. Additionally, as the descendants of the Church's first Catholicos, Gregory the Illuminator, their invocation as prophetic saints reinforced the notion of prestigious genealogies and hereditary succession as the appropriate means of transferring power.

The *Visions* themselves are excerpts of larger works that concern the lives of the respective Catholicoi. Moreover, the figures to whom the visions were attributed lived in the fourth century, yet their works have been redacted over time in order to address contemporary issues.[74] In the present examination, the prophecies originate from manuscripts produced in the twelfth century.[75] The discussion below is based upon edited volumes of Armenian national history that were curated by the Armenian Catholic monastic order of the Mkhit'areans. The *Visions*, as they existed in the twelfth-century recensions, discuss prophecies concerning the end times. The following excerpt from the *Vision of St. Nersēs*, although set in the fourth century, presents political contingencies that would have been relevant to a twelfth-century Armenian audience as well:

[74] Zaroui Pogossian, "The Last Emperor or the Last Armenian King? Some Considerations on Armenian Apocalyptic Literature from the Cilician Period," in *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective*, eds. Kevork Bardakjian and Sergio La Porta (Brill, 2014): 466.
[75] Pogossian, "The Last Emperor or the Last Armenian King?" 458.

> Then the ruination of the land of the Armenians will begin out of deception and lack of regard for one another. Since the princes will not submit [to the king], but will rather be divided, each in their provinces, and will not come to stand at one another's backs, but will join the side of the enemy. After that, they will be in their own lands, and they will be brought under the rule of the Greeks, into serfdom and servitude. And they will become weak in their faith. And in this way, their authority will wane.[76]

The notion that predictions from Catholicoi who lived centuries before the fall of the Bagratuni kingdom would have been circulated during this strenuous time suggests that medieval Armenian authors were striving to contextualize their circumstances by situating them in a larger cosmic narrative. The loss of the Bagratuni kingdom and the invasion of the Seljuks are no longer examples of meaningless violence. Rather, they are plot points in a story that culminates in a new era of prosperity for Armenians. It is noteworthy that in the excerpt the responsible party in Armenia's downfall is the aristocracy. According to the text, what the princes lack is a sense of solidarity with one another, as they choose to occupy themselves with profiting from an existential threat. Moreover, it is significant that the other major Armenian center of power, the priesthood, is absent in this passage. This suggests that an active and influential clergy could have contributed to the preservation of the kingdom. The excerpt goes so far as to imply that Greek annexation will result in both a life of servitude and a weakening of one's faith, thereby correlating appropriate religious practice with political power. Abraham Terian explores the religious tensions between the Armenians who had become subject to the Byzantine Empire in "To Byzantium with Love." In this chapter, Abraham Terian discusses the various rulings that

[76] Արդ սկիզբն աշխարհաց աւերածոյն Հայոց `ի նենգութենէ եղիցի և յանհնազանդութենէ միմիեանց. Զի ոչ հնազանդին իշխանքն, այլ բարժանին յիւրաքանչիւր գաւառս, և ոչ հասցեն միմեանց `ի թիկունս, այլ `ի թշնամեացն կողմն եղիցին: Յետ այնորիկ եղցեն յիւրաքանչիւր հայրենեաց և անկցին զիշխանութեամբն Յունաց `ի ստրկութիւն և `ի ծառայութեան. և թուլասցին և `ի հաւատոց. և այնպէս պակասեսցին իշխանութիւն նոցա: *Patmut'iwn Srp'uyn Nersisi Part'ewi Hayots' Hayrapet'i*, vol. 6 of *Soperk' Haykakan'* (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1853), 90.

the Greek Church made against Armenians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, such as the burning of the books of the Holy Sacraments of the Armenians, as well as the various punitive measures for Christians who eat with or marry Armenians.[77] While the rulings made against the doctrines of the Armenian church may not have directly impacted the quality of life of Armenians outside of the ecclesiastical establishment, the rulings against fraternizing with Armenians could have been a cause for consternation and disillusionment among the empire's new subjects.

Predicting that Armenia may fall to "the Greeks" is not particularly surprising, given that the region contended with the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire for centuries. However, taking into consideration that this recension of *Vision of St. Nersēs* was produced in the mid-twelfth century, an Armenian writer from the region would have had to contend with more pressure than from the Byzantines alone. In another excerpt from the *Vision of St. Nersēs,* readers encounter another facet of Armenia's destruction:

> And the priesthood of Armenia will cease for many years. Armenia will be destroyed from its foundations. The nation of archers will take the inaccessible fortresses. And that nation will eat the arms of its own body according to the prognostications of Isaiah.[78]

In this passage, the writer once again draws attention to the lack of a priesthood. Without an active clergy, there is neither a political check on the power of the nobility, nor is there the possibility of reliable spiritual guidance in such trying times. Regarding the identity of this new threat, Zaroui Pogossian has written at length regarding the enigmatic "Nation of Archers" and their role in the *Vision*. Although the term gained greater popularity in Armenian historiography

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[77] Abraham Terian, "To Byzantium with Love: The Overtures of Saint Nerses the Gracious," in *Armenian Cilicia*, eds. Richard Hovannisian and Simon Payaslian (Mazda Publishers, 2008), 138.

[78] Լռեսցի և քահանայութիւնս Հայոց զամս բազումս. Տապալեսցի `ի հիմանէ Հայք. Առցին և պարիսպք անմատոյցք `ի նետողաց ազգաց. և կերիցեն ազգն այն զմարմինս բազկաց իւրեանց, ըստ կանխասացութեան Եսայեայ: *Pat'mut'iwn Srp'uyn Nersisi Part'ewi Hayots' Hayrapet'i*, 91.

from Girgor Aknerts‘i’s *History of the Nation of Archers* as a term referring to the Mongols, Pogossian illustrates how the term came into vogue from a redacted version of *The Vision of St. Nersēs* produced in the twelfth century.[79] She surmises that the term was used to refer to the Seljuks by pointing out the nomads’ proficiency as horse archers, in addition to the Biblical attribution of Ismael as a great archer.[80] Additionally, the excerpt’s mention of the nation eating parts of its own body coincides with the fragmentation of the Seljuk Empire, and the establishment of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. The combination of these premises lends itself to a teleology, in which the Seljuk invasions herald a necessary era of destruction. However, as devastating as the invasion was, in terms of its impact on the security of Armenians in eastern Anatolia, St. Nersēs’ vision also contains elements that are hopeful, or even triumphant, for his audience. For example, as the saint discusses a prophecy, in which the Byzantine Empire wages war with the Sasanian Empire—a contemporary of St. Nerses—the author writes the following:

> Then after this, in one hundred and fifty years, the Persians will seize the holy city of Jerusalem, and that same cross, and drive it into slavery. And that which is taken to Persia, will nevermore return to Jerusalem. And Jerusalem will no longer exist in the kingdom of the Greeks, and the Ismaelites will rule it, and will cast it down with taxes upon the Greeks until the time of the approach of the valiant nation. And then the nation of Romans, who are called Franks, will take Jerusalem and will relieve the taxation of the Greeks.[81]

[79] Grigor Aknerts‘i’s chronicle will be cited as *Patmut‘iwn T‘at‘arats‘* (*History of the Tatars*) because that is the title chosen by the editor of the edition of the chronicle consulted in this dissertation. That being said, the discussion will continue to refer to his chronicle by its more common name *History of the Nation of Archers* for the sake of clarity.
[80] Zaroui Pogossian, “An ‘Un-known and Unbridled People’: Vardan Arewelc‘i’s Colophon on the Mongols,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 23 (2014), 13 n. 17.
[81] Յետ այնորիկ `ի լնուլ ամաց հարիւր և յիսնից առցեն զսուրբ քաղաքն Երուսաղեմ Պարսիկք, և նոյն ինքն զխաչն, և վարեսցէն `ի գերութիւն. և իբրեւ դարձի `ի Պարսկաց՝ ոչ եւս դարձի յԵրուսաղեմ. և Երուսաղեմ ոչ եւս կացցէ յիշխանութեան Յունաց, և իսմայելացիք տիրեսցեն նմա, և արկցեն ընդ հարկիւ զՅոյնսն մինչեւ `ի ժամանակս մերձենալոյ արիական ազգին. և ապա առցեն զԵրուսաղեմ ազգն Հռոմվմայցու՝ որ անուանին Ֆռանգք, և բարձցեն զհարկատրութիւն Յունաց: *Pat‘mut‘iwn Srp‘uyn Nersisi Part‘ewi Hayots‘ Hayrapet‘i*, 90.

It seems from the excerpt that the past has become present for the author of this redaction of the *Vision.* Although the text is meant to prophesy the loss of Jerusalem in the wars against the Sasanians, the author introduces the Ismaelites as the next rulers of the city. As the Ismaelites—a term usually used in premodern Armenian writing to refer to Muslims—are introduced without context and in the same breath as this conflict, there seems to be a conflation between them and the Sasanians. This conflation could result from a variety of reasons. It is possible that the author simply confused one for the other, as the capitals of both the Sasanian Empire and the contemporary Abbasid Caliphate were located very near one another. Moreover, the author's use of the term *Parsikk'*, translated above as Persians, could be a reference to the occupiers' geographic origins rather than their cultural or dynastic origins. That being said, the author could also have conflated the two groups intentionally in a bid to illustrate the cyclical nature of the cosmos. Just as the Byzantines lost Jerusalem to the Sasanians in 614, so too did they lose the city again to the Rashidun Caliphate in 637. This repetition could have been used as a literary device to illustrate a triumphant change in fortunes for Armenia, from a state of despondency to another golden age.

The passage also introduces another power player to the conflict that serves both a contemporary and historical role in the prophecy's narrative. At the point in time when this vision was redacted, there would have been a profusion of reasons for Armenians to view the coming of the Frankish crusaders as a reason for celebration. To the Armenians, the Franks presented an alternative to subjugation by both the Byzantines and the Seljuks. As Christian forces that were ecclesiastically and politically independent from Constantinople, the Franks frequently collaborated with local Armenians in carving out their domains at the expense of the two imperial powers in the region. It is also worth mentioning that although the emperors in

Constantinople styled themselves as Romans, it is to the Franks that the author ascribes this term. The reason for this change is, once again, unclear. Zaroui Pogossian suggests in her "Armenians, Mongols, and the End of Times," that the text, in its original form, may have been a reference to the Byzantine Empire.[82] The shift towards the Franks seems to have resulted from the souring of relations following Greater Armenia's annexation and religious persecution. Ashot Hovhannisyan addresses this shift in perspective by suggesting that the dashed hopes of Byzantine support against the Seljuk onslaughts, coupled with the realized support from the Franks during the First Crusade, led to a new anti-Byzantine slant in the sources.[83] This notion seems likely, considering how the *Vision of St. Nersēs* develops the Romans as characters in the prophecy:

> And these valiant armies of Romans will be the salvation of all of the land's Christians. And then the country will be peaceful and righteous in manner for a long time. It will become a complete paradise. And the lawless will be driven out, and will fall under the Romans' yoke of the service. And those people will lament the passing of those who did not live to see such goodness.[84]

The portrayal of the Romans as an unambiguously benevolent force certainly contradicts the resentment that contemporary Armenian sources conveyed regarding the Byzantines. The author seems to have been attempting to portray the Crusaders as the medieval equivalents to the Romans of the late antique period, to whom St. Nersēs ostensibly referred. It is also worth noting that the author was not alone in making such connections. Matthew of Edessa, for example, also perceived the coming of the Crusaders as the return of the Romans in his *Chronicle*, even going

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[82] Zaroui Pogossian, "Armenians, Mongols, and the End of Times: An Overview of 13th Century Sources," in *Caucasus during the Mongol Period-Der Kaukasus in der Mongolonzeit*, eds. Jürgen Tubach, Sophie G. Vashalomidze, and Manfred Zimmer (Reichert Verlag, 2012), 169.

[83] Hovhannisyan, *Drvagner hay azatagrakan mtk'i patmut'*, 47-48.

[84] Եւ յես այսորիկ փրկութիւն ամենայն աշվարհաց քրիստովնէից յարիական զօրացն եղիցի `ի Հռովմայցւոց. և ապա խաղաղեսցի երկիր `ի բարի գնացս ժամանկս բազումս. որպէս զդրախտ ամենալից դարձի: Եւ հերքեսցին անօրէնք, և անկցին ընդ լծով ծառայութեան Հռովմայեցւոցն. և մարդիկ աւաղեսցեն զանցեալն և զոչ հանդիպեալսն այնմ բարեաց: *Pat'mut'iwn Srp'uyn Nersisi Part'ewi Hayots' Hayrapet'i,* 92-93.

so far as to associate the Crusader leader Godfrey with the crown of the Roman emperor Vespasian.[85] Christopher MacEvitt has commented on this broader phenomenon. In his "True Romans, he writes that, in addition to being familiar with and referring to St. Nersēs in his prophetic theories on the Crusaders, Matthew of Edessa's readiness to associate them with the Romans may have been a reflection of his shock and disbelief at the Latins' success in taking Jerusalem.[86] The attribution of political events to prophecy aside, it is curious to see how medieval writers interacted with the prophetic apocrypha that were in circulation. In addition to reproducing them as manuscripts, Matthew of Edessa's *Chronicle* highlights how authors would continue to interpret and apply these predictions to their respective circumstances, making the somewhat open-ended prophecies more explicit.

When historicizing the author's choice to associate the Romans with the Franks, it is also important to consider the role the "Romans" were to play in the revival of Armenian kingship. In addition to establishing crusader holdings in Edessa, Tripoli, Antioch, and Jerusalem, the Latin invasion of the Levant was a crucial element for the elevation of Cilicia from a principality to an acknowledged kingdom. The chaos of the crusades provided the necessary power vacuum for the Ṛubenean family to consolidate its rule over the region. However, this elevation only became possible with the consent and active support of the crusaders. Zaroui Pogossian explores this aspect of Western Europe's relationship with Cilician Armenia in her monograph *The Letter of Love and Concord*. In terms of the Ṛubeneans' aggrandizing themselves through the Crusades, Pogossian writes, "…given the strength of Salah al-Din, who constantly threatened Levon's domains, as well as Levon's other Muslim neighbor Kilidj Arslan, the Armenian prince could

[85] Matt'ēos Uṛhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 253; For the connection between and Vespasian, see Matt'ēos Uṛhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 254.
[86]Christopher MacEvitt, "True Romans: Remembering the Crusades among Eastern Christians," *Journal of Medieval History* 40, no. 3 (2014), 266.

support a Crusade only if he were sure of its success and if such a venture could strengthen his own position in the Levant. The promise of a crown could serve the latter purpose."[87] Beyond showing that the Ṛubeneans pursued a pragmatic alliance with the crusaders, Pogossian's contribution lies in her analysis of a twelfth-century forged letter describing a visit of King Trdat III and Catholicos Gregory the Illuminator to Emperor Constantine and Pope Sylvester that took place in the fourth century. Over the course of the text, she discusses the propensity for medieval Armenian authors to utilize an imagined past between Armenians and Western Europeans for the purpose of fostering diplomatic solidarity.[88] In so doing, Pogossian frequently makes reference to the practice of disguising contemporary texts as older, more authoritative evidence for the fulfillment of a prophesied resurrection of an Armenian kingdom.[89]

The circulation of this document also provides a glimpse into the negotiated kingship that its author intended to establish in Cilicia. Pogossian discusses the relationship that the *Letter* was meant to cultivate between the Armenian kingdom, the Armenian Church, the Catholic Church, and the Roman Emperor. She writes, "The *Letter* has a very strong emphasis on the independence of the Armenian Kingdom and the Armenian Church, even though it recognises a primacy of honour reserved for the Roman Pope…The conferral of numerous Eastern provinces to Trdat and his appointment by Constantine as his second man and supreme ruler of the East are equally meaningful."[90] Considering the existing literature that perceived the Crusades as the return of the Roman Empire to the Levant, the ambitions expressed in the *Letter* heavily imply that the Armenians of Cilicia should autonomously rule the region on behalf of the "Romans."

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[87] *The Letter of Love and Concord*, in Zaroui Pogossian, *The Letter of Love and Concord: A Revised Diplomatic Edition with Historical and Textual Comment and English Translation* (Brill, 2010), 14.
[88] Pogossian, *The Letter of Love and Concord*, 50.
[89] Pogossian, *The Letter of Love and Concord*, 45, 47, 125.
[90] Pogossian, *The Letter of Love and Concord,* 120.

However, the issue of submission to Rome did eventually come to a head during Lewon's coronation in 1198. In the *History of the Armenians* by Kirakos Gandzakets'i, the Caucasian writer references the coronation in the context of Lewon's acknowledgement of Roman ecclesiastical supremacy. In response to the Armenian clergy's consternation at Lewon's acquiescence, the chronicler has Lewon responding, "Do not worry about that. I will satisfy them this time through deception."[91] From this reported exchange between the would-be king and the bishops, we begin to see the conflict that would come to haunt Armenian Cilician politics for the entirety of its existence. Moreover, we can also see a growing tension regarding the variety of sacred kingship that would be established. Before Lewon's coronation, the Armenian barons of Cilicia ruled by means of military might, diplomacy. Although their authority was couched in Christian terms, intervention by a priestly class was minimal. When we evaluate their power on the spectrum of immanentism to transcendentalism, where the former denotes an unmediated access to meta-person status and latter denotes a subordinated position to a universal law, the early Cilician rulers espoused a syncretic authority with a significant degree of the former.[92] However, the introduction of coronation ceremonies and kingship through Papal or Catholicos sanction drew their authority progressively further toward the latter pole. What began as a desire to ideologically merge Armenian kingship with the Crusades as an eschatological phenomenon resulted in intensified ecclesiastical mediation in royal legitimacy.

1.3 Prophecies of Renewal: Creating a new Arshakuni Dispensation

[91] Դուք մի՛ ինչ հոգայք վասն այդորիկ, ես հաճեցից զմիտս նոցա առ անգամ մի կեղծաւորութեամբ: Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 157.
[92] Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History," 14-17.

In the midst of the lively environment of apocalyptic literature, in which the destructive narratives ended in restoration and salvation, the role of the Armenian nobility and clergy remained a thorny issue. A redacted *Vision* of the fifth-century Catholicos Sahak the Parthian addressed this discrepancy, however. It predicted that the kingdom of Armenia would indeed be redeemed, but only upon the fulfillment of certain dynastic criteria. In terms of familial descent *The Vision of St. Sahak* the author writes:

> And another series and a half, which appeared before you and miraculously wrote chrysographically upon the bottom of the parchment, according to the first decreed orders of writing on the beginning of the parchment, recognize that it is proven, that at the approach of the corruption from the desert the kingdom shall once again be taken into the hands of a one from the nation of the Arshakunis, and the throne of the patriarchate will be restored to one of the line of the holy Grigor.[93]

The idea that an Arshakuni would restore the kingdom is an appropriate perspective for the ostensible author of the vision, as St. Sahak lived and served as Catholicos when Armenia was ruled by the Arshakuni dynasty. The fulfillment of the prophecy, however, was more difficult due to the lack of a suitable Arshakuni heir. The Ṛubenean family that had become one of the dominant factions in Cilicia did not boast of their Arshakuni ancestry. While the Het‘umeans did eventually declare their descent from the Arshakunis by way of the cadet branch of the P‘ahlavunis, this notion was not expressed until after the family had assumed the throne in Cilicia in the thirteenth century.[94] Moreover, during the baronial period, the Het‘umean family continued to be staunch advocates of Byzantine hegemony in the area and did not attempt to break away.[95] As a result, they did not participate in the genealogical conflicts of the era.

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[93]Եւ այլ կարգ մի և կէս կարգի որ երեւեցաւ քեզ գրեալ ըսքանչելապէս ոսկեգիր գրով ի ստորին մագաղաթին, ըստ առաջին յօրինեալ կարգացն գրելոց յիսկզբանն մագաղաթին, ծանիր հաւաստեաւ, զի մերձ յերեւումն պղծոյն անապատի դարձեալ յառնէ թագաւոր ազգէն Արշակունեաց, և նորոգի աթոռ հայրապետութեան ի շառաւիղէ սրբոյն Գրիգորի: “Tesil Sahakay Part‘ewi,” ed. by H. Grigor Sargsean, *Bazmavēp*, no. 1 (1932), 19.

[94] Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History,* 208 n. 260.

[95] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk‘*, 171.

In addition to the lack of suitable heirs, the prophecy of St. Sahak was sufficiently well-known that it could not be dismissed by the ruling nobles of Cilicia. In the thirteenth-century chronicle of Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, the reader encounters a populist movement taking place in the region of Khachen, in modern day Nagorno-Karabakh. According to Kirakos, the leader of the movement—a man named Davit‘ who was moved to act by Satan—claimed the Armenian throne in his sons’ names on the grounds that he was of Arshakuni descent.[96] Kirakos reports Dawit‘ saying that “I am of the line of Arshakuni and it is obligatory that one of my sons becomes king and the other becomes Catholicos, and it is proper that the vision of St. Sahak be realized upon them.”[97] According to Kirakos, Davit‘ had gained quite a following as a result of his sermons, and it was only with the intercession of the local bishop that he abandoned his claim. [98] It is striking that even in a location as far from Cilicia as Khachen in the South Caucasus, St. Sahak’s vision could be effectively used among the population as an argument for kingship. This name recognition suggests that the Arshakunis’ prestige had lingered for over seven centuries, or that this redaction of the *Vision of St. Sahak* had a wide circulation. While it would have been promising to learn that so many Armenians were anticipating the return of a royal dynasty, the fact that the dynasty at issue had no ties of kinship to the Ṛubeneans or Het‘umeans represented a significant obstacle to the formation of an Armenian Cilician kingdom.

The issue of genealogy becomes even more complicated when one considers that the fulfillment of St. Sahak’s prophecy was also contingent on the Catholicosate being held by a

[96] Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 322.
[97] ՅԱրշակունեաց ազգէն եմ ես և պարտ է որդւոց իմոց լինել միյն թագաւոր և միւսոյն՝ կոթողիկոս, և սրբոյն Սահակայ տեսլեանն մարթ է ի վերայ նոցա կատարիլ: Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut’iwn Hayots‘*, 328.
[98]Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut’iwn Hayots‘*, 328.

member of the line of Grigor the Illuminator. The inclusion of this condition on the prophecy's fulfillment contributed to political tensions in Cilicia for two principal reasons. The first reason is that at the time of Cilicia's political consolidation, the Catholicosate had already ostensibly been in the hands of Grigor's descendants for over a century.[99] Grigor the Illuminator, the first Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church, had been a member of the Arsacid family. Since the fourth century, the P'ahlavunis had secured an elevated position in both Byzantine and Armenian societies as statesmen, military commanders, and Catholicoi.[100] Since the fall of Ani to the Seljuks and the transfer of the seat of the Armenian Catholicosate, first to Sebastia and then to Hromkla, the office had remained in the hands of the P'ahlavuni family. Having this second condition already fulfilled by the time of the Ṛubeneans' rise to power, along with the myriad other predictions discussed above, could have added a considerable degree of pressure to the Ṛubeneans due to their lack of prophetic legitimacy.

The second cause for strife that the prophecy may have engendered in Cilicia was that the P'ahlavuni family itself was able to claim Arshakuni descent. Moreover, the twelfth-century Catholicos Nersēs IV, known as Nersēs Shnorhali (*the Graceful*), was aware of this possibility. In perhaps the greatest example of the *Vision of St. Sahak* influencing Armenian literature, Nersēs Shnorhali wrote an incredibly influential versified family history. This chronicle, known as *Vipasanut'iwn* or *Historical Recitation* creates a narrative for the P'ahlavuni family that is simultaneously epic in its scope and relevant to contemporary readers. This is primarily due to the text's incorporation of semi-mythical stories of the ancient past with more grounded

[99] The Catholicos claimed descent from the P'ahlavuni noble family, which itself claimed descent from the Arshakuni family and Gregory the Illuminator by way of the senior branch of their family, the Kamsarakans. For more see: Cyril Toumanoff, "Kamsarakan," Encyclopaedia Iranica (online ed.), accessed November 24, 2025, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kamsarakan.
[100] Matt'ēos Uṛhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn,* 269.

descriptions of events taking place during the Crusades. As a result, the P‘ahlavunis appear as a family that has consistently been central to questions of Armenian authority throughout history. The narrative of the chronicle begins with an origin for the Armenian people that begins with their descent from the sons of Noah. Then the text moves on to discuss the establishment of the P‘ahlavuni family. Shnorhali writes:

> Then, beginning from this astonishment,
> The Parthian house was named,
> From which Arshak was crowned,
> Creating the Arshakuni line,
> And he took the city of Bahl,
> And they were called the P‘ahlavunis
> One nation ruled with absolute power,
> Over the eastern lands,
> They put the Alexandrians to flight,
> And sat upon the throne of Darius.[101]

From this excerpt alone, the reader is able to discern Shnorhali’s perspective on the P‘ahlavuni clan, in addition to its place on the world stage. By having the conquerors of Bahl be named P‘ahlavuni establishes a proximity between the P‘ahlavunis and the Arshakunis. The wording of the text gives the impression that the P‘ahlavunis are synonymous with the Arshakuni line, if not a cadet branch of the family. From this premise alone, Shnorhali makes a cogent argument that his family could provide a worthy pool of candidates with which to fulfill the prophecy of St. Sahak. Moreover, the name P‘ahlavuni also functions here as a callback to the family’s Iranian origins. As the term *Pahlavān* may be translated as champion in Persian, it may be that Shnorhali was using

[101] Արդ, ի սորին զարմէ սկսեալ Պարթեւական տոհմ անուանեալ, Ոստի Արշակ թագաւորեալ, Արշակունի ազգն ցեղեալ Եւ զքաղաքն Բահլ առեալ, Պահլաւունիք անդ կոչեցեալ: Մի՛ ազգ միապետեալ, Արևելեան կողմանց տիրեալ, Զաղեքսանդրեանսն փախուցեալ, Ի Դարեհի գահուն նստեալ: Nersēs Shnorhali, *Vipasanut‘iwn*, ed. Manik Mkrtchyan (Haykakan SSH Gitut‘yunneri Ak‘ademia, 1981), 44-45.

the name descriptively, as well as for the purposes of establishing kinship with the Arshakunis.

Beyond the candidacy of the P‘ahlavunis as heir to Armenian kingship, Shnorhali’s words also provide a glimpse into what that potentiality could provide for the region. By having the conquerors of Bahl defeat the Alexandrians, Shnorhali is making a statement regarding the power of his family. Naming the enemies as Alexandrians, rather than as Seleucids grants Shnorhali’s ancestors a heroic quality. As the Alexander Romance had by this point already proliferated in many languages across the region, having the P‘ahlavunis defeat such a mythical force would lend a greater prestige to Shnorhali’s ancestors as well. Moreover, by having these opponents be of Macedonian origins, the author may have been highlighting the capability of his family to rival the Byzantine Empire, whom the Armenian sources called “the Greeks” at this time.

Finally, Shnorhali’s comment that the P‘ahlavunis eventually sat upon the throne of Darius presents an interesting perspective on his family’s, and by extension the Armenia nation’s, place on the geopolitical stage. Shnorhali’s reference to the Achaemenid Empire suggests that the P‘ahlavunis’ success brought about a redemption of the Persian Empire of Darius. By situating the P‘ahlavunis in an Iranian milieu, Shnorhali casts his ancestors as restorers, rather than as conquerors. Although by time the church sanctioned expressions of Armenian culture had diverged considerably from its Iranian past, the sentiment of the P‘ahlavunis as the restorers of an ancient splendor would have been relevant in an Armenian context. Just as the P‘ahlavunis were able to overcome Alexander’s forces and establish a new Achaemenid Empire, so too could they resurrect the kingdom of Armenia. It must be said that the heroic deeds and proper genealogy of

the P‘ahlavuni family, while applicable to the *Vision* of St. Sahak, does not necessarily indicate a desire on the part of Nersēs Shnorhali to make a bid for the Armenian crown. The versified history of the P‘ahlavunis may have served to provide a check on the ambitions of the Ṛubeneans, who claimed descent from the defunct Bagratuni kings of Greater Armenia. By outclassing the Ṛubeneans in the competition for prestigious genealogies, Nersēs Shnorhali may have simply intended to cow the dynasty. This possibility would fit into a broader trend in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of eschatological language being used as a means of expanding clerical authority. In his analysis of the thirteenth-century eschatological writer Vardan Aygekts‘i, Sergio La Porta argues that the medieval Armenian apocalyptic tradition was adapted into a didactic tool to justify ecclesiastical authority.[102]

The notion that the poem is meant as a means of mediating the ambitions of the Ṛubenean family becomes more apparent as the text continues. Moving on from discussing the greatness of the Arshakuni dynasty of Late Antiquity to the subsequent rise of Islam, Shnorhali’s Armenian historical survey inevitably encounters the Bagratuni era. The Bagratunis, being the most recent royal Armenian dynasty naturally become a point of comparison for the Arshakunis and, by extension, the P‘ahlavunis. That being said, *Vipasanut‘iwn* does not pass over the rule of the Bagratunis altogether, nor does it seek to explicitly name as illegitimate rulers of the Armenian kingdom. The author gives credit to the dynasty for having restored Armenia, its lords, and its church to its previous splendor. He writes:

> And some years passed after that which occurred,
> And the times stretched on,
> And evil was diminished,

[102] La Porta, “Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century,” 269–94.

The Armenian spirit was refreshed,
For the Bagratunis were crowned
And specifically ruled over the Armenians,
They illuminated the churches,
They restored the thrones of the nobility.[103]

From this excerpt, it would seem that Shnorhali admires the achievements of the Bagratuni family. However, while the Bagratunis are not forgotten entirely, their almost two-century long reign as kings in Greater Armenia is remarkably condensed. Although the accomplishments of other factions are discussed in the chronicle, it is clear that it is his own family that takes center stage. After paying homage to the Bagratunis for their work in restoring Armenian authority in the region, he next shifts back to the political and military efforts of individuals from the P'ahlavuni family. When *Vipasanut'iwn* does return to the Bagratunis, it is only to trace the end of their kingship. Regarding Gagik II, the final Bagratuni king, Shnorhali writes:

At that time our king
Was the one called Gagik,
He, who gave Kars to the Greeks,
And took the village of Tzamndaw,
With great effort he exerted himself,
He sold an uncountable number of such things,
Including the aforementioned Kars,
This dispute was reciprocated,
For the shepherd of the Armenians once again
Sat upon the empty throne.[104]

[103] Իսկ յետ ամաց այն ինչ անցեալ, ժամանկացն յերկարեալ, Փոքր ինչ չարին աղօտացեալ, Հայոց ոգի և շունչ առեալ, Բագրատունեաց թագաւորեալ Եւ մասնաւոր Հայոց տիրեալ, Եկեղեցիք լուսաւորեալ, Նախարարաց գահ նորոգեալ: Nersēs Shnorhali, *Vipasanut'iwn*, 103.

[104] Յայնժամ արքայն մեր կոչեցեալ Գագիկ անուն վերաձայնեալ, Այն, որ զԿարս ի Յոյնս տուեալ, Ձճամնդաւ դղեակն առեալ, Ջանիւ մեծաւ գուն գործեգեալ, Ինչս բազումս անթիւ ծախեալ, Նաև զԿարս նավասացեալ, Այսր խնդրոյ փոխանակեալ, Ձի հովուապետ Հայոց դարձեալ Նստցի յաթոռն ունայնացեալ: Nersēs Shnorhali, *Vipasanut'iwn*, 114-115.

Shnorhali's tone in his depiction of Gagik II is far more ambivalent than his thoughts on the dynasty as a whole. Once again, he gives credit Gagik for his efforts to restore the Armenian Catholicos to the empty throne. Moreover, Gagik is not depicted as being idle, but as a king who was in active negotiations with the Greeks. However, the overall impression that Shnorhali provides of Gagik II is of an inept king who ultimately lost his title. The author's repetition of Gagik's surrender of Kars appears to be a particularly bitter aspect of his deal with the Byzantine Empire. The reference to Gagik's reward as a village also implies a disparity in the terms of his surrender. The comparison between the Bagratunis and the P'ahlavunis in *Vipasanut'iwn* presents a considerable case for the genealogical superiority of Shnorhali's family. In the text, the P'ahlavunis are not only unmarred by the ignominies faced by the rival Bagratunis, but they are also known for their ancient provenance and mythical heroism.

In spite of St. Sahak's prophecy, however, by the time of Shnorhali's tenure as the Catholicos of Armenians, as well as that of his predecessor, military power in Cilicia was tenuously in the hands of the Ṛubenean family. Although the P'ahlavuni family had risen to prominence in recent decades as military commanders and statesmen in the Byzantine Empire, the staunchly anti-Byzantine Ṛubeneans stood as a considerable obstacle to P'ahlavuni aspirations for power. While lacking the pedigree necessary for the seizure of kingship according to Sahak-ian criteria, the Ṛubeneans—and later Het'umeans—instead sought to assert an alternative genealogical pathway to royalty by means of association with the Bagratuni family.[105] While the Arshakuni dynasty carried a great deal of weight among medieval Armenians, due to its connection with prophecy, genealogical descent from the Bagratunis promised a king whose

[105] Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 192.

rule was steeped in Biblical lore, and whose authority would be centered on stability, continuity, and security.

1.4 The Ṛubeneans' Response: Circumventing Prophecy through Biblical Genealogies

The chronicle of Movses Khorenatsʻi is an essential resource to consult when approaching the genealogical significance of the Bagratuni family. Written as a three-volume chronicle, the text tells the story of the Armenian people from their Biblical genesis to the fall of the Arshakuni kingdom of Armenia in the year 428.[106] That being said, the chronicle centers the narrative around the Bagratuni family, mirroring Shnorhali's attention to the Arshakunis. In spite of the text being written centuries before the time period in question, Khorenatsʻi's history had retained some measure of popularity in the high middle ages. Both Khorenatsʻi and his chronicle are mentioned in the twelfth-century history of Samuēl of Ani.[107] The idea that the *History of the Armenians* was a recognizable work for Cilician-era Armenian writers lends credence to the notion that subsequent Cilician-era genealogical treatises built upon the framework established by Khorenatsʻi.

The impact of Khorenatsʻi on the royal ideology fostered by the king of Cilicia becomes apparent almost immediately with the author's proposed ethnogenesis for both the Armenians and the Bagratuni family. Khorenatsʻi begins his text with a discussion on the circumstances surrounding the composition of the chronicle. He complains that he must be the first to write a

[106] *Hayotsʻ Patmutʻiwn* was a chronicle of Armenian political history, possibly written as late as the eighth century and dedicated to Movsēs Khorenatsʻi's patron Sahak Bagratuni. See Robert Bedrosian, "Translator's Preface," in *Selections from the History of the Armenians, attributed to Movses of Xoren*, trans. Robert Bedrosian (Long Branch, 2025), accessed January 25, 2026, https://archive.org/details/mx-multilingual-01-02.
[107] Samuēli Kʻahanay Anetsʻi, *Hawakʻuvmnkʻi Grotsʻ Patmagratsʻ*, 3, 10.

history of his people, saying, "So then it is clear to us that our kings and other leaders of the past were not endowed with wisdom or reason."[108] He also dismisses the lack of an Armenian alphabet as a valid reason for neglecting to write an Armenian history, saying that Armenians could have resorted to oral tradition or made use of Greek or Persian as they had periodically done in the past.[109] These accusations, while petty at first glance, serve a larger purpose in his narrative. By declaring that he is the first person to embark on such an undertaking, and because he is being patronized by the Bagratuni family, Khorenatsʻi is presenting the Bagratuni family as one that has a unique interest in history in particular, and scholarship in general.

Khorenatsʻi then proceeds to trace the origins of the Armenian people by referring to the sons of Noah in the Bible. According to Khorenatsʻi, the Armenians were descendants of Japeth through his great-grandson Tʻorgom.[110] This term seems to have had a great deal of currency among medieval Armenian authors as it is frequently invoked when discussing ethnic origins. In Nersēs Shnorhali's *Vipasanutʻiwn*, for example, the Catholicos also refers to this same genealogy:

> As for Yabet who originated us,
> First Gomer was born,
> And from him came into existence
> He, who is called Tʻiras.
> And from thence by birth he came forth,
> And became the father of Tʻorgom,
> From whom Moses was derived,
> And left us here.
> So Torgoma birthed Hayk,[111]

[108] ապա ուրեմն ամենեցուն մեզ յայտնի է թագաւորացն մերոց և այլոց առաջնոցն առ ի յիմաստն տխմարութիւն, և անկատարութիւն ոգւոյն բանականի: Movsēs Khorenatsʻi, *Hayotsʻ Patmutʻiwn*, 12.
[109] Movsēs Khorenatsʻi, *Hayotsʻ Patmutʻiwn,* 12.
[110] Movsēs Khorenatsʻi, *Hayotsʻ Patmutʻiwn,* 22.
[111] Hayk is the mythical ethnogenitor of the Armenian people.

It is noteworthy that Nersēs actually attributes this genealogy to Movses. Although the era, in which Khorenatsʻi wrote his chronicle is still debated among scholars, Nersēs' reference suggests that Movses may very well have been the first Armenian writer to embark on such a broad survey of Armenian history.

What is striking about Khorenatsʻi's focus on Tʻorgom in his ethnogenesis is that he does not situate the Bagratuni family in this lineage. Instead, Khorenatsʻi claims an origin story for the Bagratunis that begins with the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar II. In the text, he writes that the Armenian king Hrachea requested from Nebuchadnezzar to grant him from his enslaved Jews a certain Shambat, whom he granted honors and from whom the Bagratuni family descends.[112] The introduction of the Bagratunis as outsiders who prosper in Armenia is a notion loaded with implications, regarding the family's future prospects as kings of the Armenians. Robert Thomson, for example, argues that the Jewish provenance serves to promote the prestige of the Bagratunis. He writes regarding this topic, "Thus two points are immediately established: the antiquity of the family and their social prominence, Shambat enjoying an honorable position a thousand years before the time of Moses claims to be writing, and the Jewish connection proved by etymology."[113] While the benefits of having a long-standing precedent for authority in the region is obviously helpful towards any argument for a Bagratuni kingship, Thomson's second point warrants further exploration.

The Jewish connection of the Bagratunis coincide with the notion of "stranger-kings." In David Graeber's and Marshall Sahlin's seminal text *On Kings,* the scholars discuss the importance of genealogy to kingship through their discussion of the "stranger-king"

[112] Movsēs Khorenatsʻi, *Patmutʻiwn Hayotsʻ,* 80, fn 1.
[113] Movses Khorenatsʻi, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and ed. Robert W. Thomson (Harvard University Press, 1978), 29.

phenomenon. They explain that premodern kingdoms are usually the product of kings who are of foreign ancestry in relation to the people that they rule.[114] Even in the case of native rulers, the authors suggest that kings would adopt a foreign identity, thereby making themselves foreigners to the kingdom.[115] This understanding of royal genealogy seems to be applicable in the Bagratuni case as well. Khorenatsʻi's portrayal of the Bagratunis as "stranger-kings" could have been an attempt to genealogically distinguish the Bagratunis from any possible rival claimants to the Armenian throne. Barring this possibility, the benefits of Jewish origins for the Bagratunis may have provided the family with spiritual legitimacy to make up for their lack of Arshakuni legitimacy. Because the Bagratunis did not claim Parthian ancestry, like the Pʻahlavunis or the Arshakunis, it is possible that Khorenatsʻi described them as Jewish in order to situate them within a monotheistic and Biblical tradition. Thomson discusses this point by referring to instances when the Bagratunis were actually persecuted, though not attainted, by the Arshakunis for their refusal to worship idols.[116] In doing so, Thomson argues that the Bagratunis are simultaneously established as religiously steadfast, and a family of high political standing.[117] By having the Bagratunis enter the Armenian political arena as dedicated Jews who also function as the hereditary coronants of the Arshakuni dynasty, Khorenatsʻi is able to bypass the obstacles created by the twelfth century *Vision of St. Sahak*.[118]

1.5. Overcoming Prophecy Through Verse: Vahram's Royal History

[114] David Graeber and Marshall Sahlins, *On Kings* (Hau Books, 2016), 5.
[115] Graeber and Sahlins, *On Kings*, 5.
[116] For more on this persecution, see Thomson's commentary in Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, 29.
[117] Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, 29.
[118] Movsēs Khorenatsʻi, *Patmutʻiwn Hayotsʻ*, 80 n.1.

As Cilicia transitioned from a loose association of warlords to a recognized kingdom, issues of legitimacy continued to take a central role in the concerns of its rulers. In order to address these issues, the rulers—be they Ṛubenean or Het'umean—directed their efforts towards imbuing their respective rules with both a sense of sacrality and security. Regarding the issue of security, Vahram Rabuni's *History of the House of Ṛubeneans* is a great example of how Cilicians attempted to allay apocalyptic fears and inspire faith and legitimacy in the midst of political instability and in spite of the circulation of various eschatological prophesies. Written by the secretary of King Lewon II the text, hereafter referred to as *Vahram's Chronicle*, is a 1,420-line versified monorhymed chronicle that outlines the history of the Ṛubenean family. What is quite telling from the chronicle is that its opening lines make reference to Nersēs Shnorhali's *Vipasanut'iwn*. Vahram writes:

> Lord Nersēs the illuminated,
> The Patriarch, wrote this,
> Having taken up the histories of the Armenians,
> And measured them for versifying.
> Beginning from the elders of old,
> And extending it until himself,
> He set down their deeds,
> As a lesson to the nation.[119]

This opening sets the tone for the rest of the chronicle. The author expresses his admiration for the Catholicos' composition. But judging from the absence of the Arshakuni family from the story, it is clear that Vahram's intent was to issue an answer to Nersēs' versified history that had implied a genealogical superiority that of his patron. The narrative begins with the end of the

[119] Տէր Ներսիսի՝ լուսազարդեալ, Հայրապետին՝ զայս բան գրեալ, Ըզպատմութիւնս՝ Հայոց առեալ, Ոտանաւոր՝ տողիւ չափեալ: Զառ ի նախնեաց՝ անտի սկսեալ, Եւ մինչև հասուցեալ. Զորպիսութիւն՝ նոցին յայտնեալ, Ի խրատ՝ հանուրց ազգի տուեալ: Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 186.

Bagratid kingdom of Greater Armenia and culminates with the accession of the text's patron Lewon II. This chosen starting point of the poem is thematically significant, in that it establishes an atmosphere of general persecution and vulnerability, setting the stage for the coming of a strong king to restore prosperity. This stands in contrast to the dynastic chronicles of other premodern Armenian authors, such as Nersēs Shnorhali. Rather than beginning the text with a description of a bygone age of splendor, Vahram describes this post-Bagratid landscape in the following way:

> And torturing them there,
> They [the Turks] placed a heavy yoke upon them,
> Those who grew weary of evil,
> Could not withstand the unbearable tribulation.
> There was a large flight towards the west,
> And toward the north,
> Abandoning their patrimonial lands,
> And living as foreigners in exile.
> Even the anointed king of the Armenians,
> He who is known as Gagik,
> Witnessed such a degree of evil.
> And he contemplated the future.[120]

As this scene follows the loss of Bagratuni sovereignty to the Byzantine Empire, and the defeat at Manzikert, the chronicle emphasizes the importance of having a Bagratuni king for the safety of the people. Comparing this introduction to the triumphant conquest of Bahl that readers encounter in *Vipasanut'iwn,* suggests that the bleak opening of *Vahram's Chronicle* is potentially due to the lack of a prophecy that the protagonists can follow. As a result, the protagonists must build up their kingdom from ground up. The author's choice to point out King Gagik II's anxieties for the future likewise draws attention to the absence of a ruling Bagratuni

[120] Եւ զնոսինն`անդ չարչարեալ, Ծանր լծովն` զոր եդեալ. Որք ի չարեացն` ձանձրացեալ, Եւ նեղութեանցն` ոչ հանդուրժեալ: Ի յարեւմուտըս` կոյս դարձեալ: Եւ ի հիւսիս` փախուստ առեալ. Ըզհայրենին` աշխարհ լքեալ, Եւ ի յօտարըս` պանդխտացեալ: Նա եւ Հայոց` արքայն օծեալ, Այն որ Գագիկն` է կոչեցեալ. Յայնքան չարիսն`նայեցեալ, Եւ զհանդերձեալըն` նկատեալ: Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 190.

king. This melancholic environment fits thematically with the redemption arc that the poem constructs, as it can be later contrasted with the air of general safety and royal splendor that follows the successful reign of Lewon II. Moreover, the flight of the people from their homes helps to explain the future establishment of an Armenian kingdom far away from the "patrimonial lands."

In addition to establishing the connection between Gagik II and Lewon II thematically, Vahram also creates a genealogical link between the two rulers whose implications exceed the need to lend the former's royal prestige to the latter. After discussing the tribulations of Gagik II, Vahram introduces the eponymous founder of the Cilician principality by writing:

> Consequently the princes were degraded and humbled
> The soldiers were disgraced.
> They abandoned their fiefs and scattered in every direction.
> The honored prince,
> Of the bloodline of Gagik,
> He was called Ṛubēn,
> Took for his own the fortress Kositar.
> When he heard about the death of Gagik,
> He moved his family,
> To the mountains of Taurus,
> Settling on the Phrygian side.[121]

It is striking that among the options for genealogical ties that Vahram could have chosen for the nascent kingdom in Cilicia, he chose the Bagratuni family. This association is significant, first and foremost, because it attempts to recast the rule of Rubēn and his descendants as a

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[121] Ուստի իշխանքն՝ նուաստեալ, եւ զօրականքն՝ արհամարհեալ. Զտէրութիւնն՝ իւրեանց լքեալ, եւ ամենայն տեղիս ցրեալ: Յորոց իշխան՝ ոմն պատուեալ, Արեանառու՝ Գագկայ եղեալ. Ռուբէն անուն՝ վերաձայնեալ, Զկոսիտառայ՝ ամրոց կալեալ: Յորժամ զԳագկայ՝ մահն լուեալ, Իւրով զարմիւք՝ըն յարուցեալ. Եւ ի Տօրոս՝ լեառըն ելեալ, Ի Փռիւգիոյ՝ կողմանսն իջեալ: Vahram, Rabuni *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants',* 192.

continuity of the previous dynasty, rather than a rupture. As the Bagratuni family was the most recent Armenian royal dynasty, membership to this clan would imply a promise of stability and prosperity that existed in the older kingdom. This constructed continuity with the Bagratunis is also a key element to the conception of Cilician kingship because it avoids engaging with the eschatological milieu that characterized the post-Manzikert status quo. Instead, Vahram seems to associate the kings of Cilicia with the royal ideology established by Khorenats'i. This divergence may stem from the tensions that the Cilician royal family had with the Armenian Catholicosate. Because neither Ṛubeneans nor the Het'umeans had claimed descent from the Arshakuni line, they were unable to compete with the likes of Nersēs Shnorhali in fulfilling the terms of St. Sahak's prophecy. Moreover, the increasingly cordial relations that both royal houses pursued with the Pope likewise would have contributed to these tensions. As a result, the ideology developed in *Vahram's Chronicle* may have been an attempt to dismiss these issues. After all, Vahram explains his reasons for writing the chronicle in the following way:

> Lēon the anointed king of the Armenians.
> By my humble command,
> Received from the Holy Father,
> That which had come to us,
> Preserved by our patriarchs,
> Deeds and words told in epic fashion,
> Told to men most assuredly,
> What was seen without eyes and heard without ears,
> This was mine to write in verse,
> For ease of recitation and pleasure.[122]

The reference to the act of writing what was neither seen nor heard may have been a challenge against the *Vipasanut'iwn*. As the Catholicos had died before the coronation of Lewon

[122] ԼԷոն Հայոց՝ արքայն օծեալ. Նուաստոթեանս՝ իմ հրամայեալ, Ի սուրբ հօրէն՝ առնուլ դարձեալ: Որ մինչ ի մեզ՝ եղեւ հասեալ, Նահապետաց՝ մերոց կացեալ. Գործք եւ կամ բանք՝ վիպասանեալ, Ի ստուգագոյն՝ արանց պատմեալ: Եւ զոր աջօք՝ մերովք տեսեալ, Եւ ականջօք՝ յայլոց լուեալ. Զայն ինձ գրել՝ բանիւ չափեալ, Առ ի լինել՝ գիւրաւ յայտնեալ: Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants',* 186.

I, the poem may be a means of communicating the triumph of the Ṛubenean family from beyond the grave. Moreover, the use of the phrase "told in epic fashion" is also quite striking, as it is translated as *vipasaneal*, the past participle of *vipasanut'iwn.* This reference to Shnorhali also helps to explain why Vahram chose to write a family chronicle in such an unusual format as verse. Beyond serving as a means of answering a challenge from a deceased Catholicos, *Vahram's Chronicle* can also be seen as an attempt to imagine a genealogical foundation for the new kingdom of Cilicia that addressed the issues the crown was plagued with at the time. It should be noted that although the text is dedicated to the Ṛubenean family, Lewon II could not boast Ṛubenean descent patrilineally, as was the custom. Including Lewon II and his father in the history of the Ṛubeneans, could be seen as a way of integrating the two into Ṛubenean dynasty and addressing lingering concerns surrounding the king's legitimacy. The lack of apocalyptic rhetoric suggests that with the thirteenth century drawing to a close, and the momentary stabilization of Cilicia's frontiers, that eschatology had lost its purchase a means of implying sacred kingship. Instead, the framing of Lewon II's crowning in the chronicle as a moment in which "The House of the Armenians was restored," suggests that the salvation prophesied in *Vision* of St. Nersēs had been fulfilled.[123]

The considerations of the kings of Armenian Cilicia as sacred kings become all the more promising upon examining the art that the Ṛubeneans, and especially the Het'umeans, patronized. Edda Vardanyan has meticulously investigated sacred kingship as it manifested in the manuscript illuminations in "The Royal Portrait in the Het'um Lectionary (1286)." Vardanyan's piece discusses the practice of juxtaposing visual representations of King Lewon II's family with the Tree of Jesse, which is a symbolic representation of Christ's genealogy as

[123] Տունս Հայոց և նորոգեալ: Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants',* 230.

foretold by the prophet Isaiah.[124] In her analysis, Vardanyan points out that the first instance of the Cilician interest in Jesus' ancestors can be traced back to the coronation of King Lewon I in 1198.[125] This suggests that in the process of having Cilicia elevated to the status of a kingdom, its rulers had not dealt with the problems of dynastic legitimacy or succession.

By finding inspiration in the Bible, the Cilicians could create their own sense of royal ideology that would be supported with Biblical precedent. Vardanyan expands on this idea in her discussion on the significance of the Tree of Jesse and the need to establish genealogical legitimacy. She writes, "The two theological theses articulated through the Tree of Jesse—namely the appearance of the incarnate Messiah and the royal origin of Christ—undergird the royal ideology that Vahram expounds on: with the coronation of Lewon II on the day of the Epiphany, the generation of Armenian kings will begin a new growth."[126] By attaching the Cilician royal ideology to the royal origin of Christ, Cilicians were able to construct a new restoration narrative without having to resort to the prophetic genealogies that disqualified their claims to power. Having Lewon II's coronation function as a stand-in for the baptism of Christ also addresses the problem of dynastic transfers of power that had emerged by this time. Having Lewon II symbolically represent Christ in his coronation, and the growing interest in the Tree of Jesse allowed him to adopt Christ's royal legitimacy. Because Christ claimed kingship through God and his mother, as well as through David and his stepfather Joseph, Lewon II's symbolic coronation legitimized his kingship in a similar way, merging two claims in a single person. Vardanyan sums up this maneuvering in the following way: "…political theology adapted sacred

[124] Vardanyan, "The Royal Portrait in the Het'um Lectionary," 96.
[125] Vardanyan, "The Royal Portrait in the Het'um Lectionary," 96.
[126] Vardanyan, "The Royal Image in the Het'um Lectionary," 106.

history to its needs, rendering it an instrument of political propaganda. The representation of the genealogy of Christ became an image exalting royal power."[127]

1.6. Conclusion

The kingdom of Armenian Cilicia was born amidst a tumultuous intellectual and political backdrop. The invasions of the Crusaders and the Seljuks destabilized the region, providing an opportunity for the warlords of Cilicia to carve out their own domain. Without the benefits of dynastic legitimacy, however, the various claimants to power lacked the precedent to rule by any right other than military might. Responding to the reasonably apocalyptic atmosphere in Anatolia and the Levant at this time, various claimants endeavored to associate their pretensions with the fulfillment of prophecy and the restoration of a secure and stable kingdom. Because of the variety of claimants, however, the criteria for kingship began to take multiple forms, as claimants strove to distinguish themselves from their rivals. In the midst of this competition, the genealogies of the pretenders took on a critical role. Whether they promised a Parthian renaissance, a Christlike sacrality, or some combination of the two, focusing royal legitimacy on familial descent imbued the claims of the various would-be kings with a particular prestige and expectation. As a result, the emphasis on genealogy functioned to bring together both ancient history and contemporary concerns in the crafting of the Cilician king.

The Ṛubeneans triumphed as the nominal rulers of Cilicia, following their royal recognition as King of the Armenians. While the coronation of Lewon I in 1198 did not mark the

[127] Vardanyan, "The Royal Image in the Het'um Lectionary," 135.

end of eschatological literature, as this coming of the Mongols in the thirteenth century would herald a new era of apocalyptic expectations. However, it did mark the end of using such texts as a means of promoting genealogy and legitimacy. Instead, with the era inaugurated by Lewon I's immediate successors came to be marked by issues of internal legitimacy and external autonomy. In the next chapter, we shall see how the power brokers of Armenian Cilicia contended with the difficulties inherent in Lewon's decision to name his four-year-old daughter as his heir.

Chapter 2 Pawns, Kings, and Queens: Dispersing Royal Authority in the Reign of Queen Zapēl

2.1 Introduction

Zapēl Ṛubenean's ascension to the Cilician throne marks a watershed in the conception and development of Armenian kingship. Recognizing a female heir signaled a shift away from the conventional method of Armenian royal inheritance that was observed in the kingdom of the Bagratunis, from whom the Ṛubeneans claimed descent.[128] Moreover, the ensuing power struggle that concluded with the martial Kostandin of Papeṛon's takeover of the kingdom's governance heralded a significant reorganization of the kingdom's administration and spiritual alignment. Lewon's diplomatic maneuvering had established a kingdom in Armenian Cilicia, in which power was imagined as being concentrated in the person of the king. That king, in turn, derived his authority from Latin powers—namely, the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. This orientation yielded a series of short-term gains, such as deeper ties with the Latin world that served to reinforce the kingdom's trade, diplomacy, and political consolidation. However, Lewon's endeavors towards integration also introduced a series of risks that would come to haunt the kingdom after his passing. Marriage alliances with polities, such as Antioch and Jerusalem, led to a proliferation of claimants to Lewon's throne, whose potential accession would incorporate his holdings into a

[128] Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 192.

larger realm. This would potentially introduce a host of new power players from the domains of Lewon's heirs, effectively diluting the power that the other princely families of Cilicia wielded. Additionally, the increase in papal influence threatened to further disrupt the balance of power in Cilicia by supplanting the authority of the local Armenian clergy.

It was in this pivotally vulnerable moment that kingship in Cilicia underwent its next major transformation, reversing much of Lewon's momentum to curtail the kingdom's reliance on the Latin world for legitimacy. Lewon had named his four-year-old daughter Zapēl as his heir shortly before he died, defying the order of succession established years before.[129] By upholding Lewon's wishes regarding the succession, the Cilician elites secured the mechanism for shaping Armenian royal ideology, in the form of their custody over the late king's four year old daughter. In this chapter, I explore this period of transition, in which a prolonged regency sees Lewon's royal authority is distributed among three people: the regent Kostandin of Papeṛon, his son Het'um, and Zapēl Ṛubenean. I approach this topic by treating contemporary chronicles, numismatic evidence, royal charters, and manuscript colophons as discursive arenas, in which the adulatory portrayals of each member delineate the boundaries of their respective access to royal power. In doing so, I will pose the following questions: How did the distribution of royal power affect how Armenian kingship functioned in the thirteenth-century Cilicia? And how did this composite model for rule address Cilicia's issues of political stability and autonomy?

[129] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 222.

The chapter will begin this discussion by examining Lewon's martial Kostandin of Papeṛon, and the decisions that propelled him to the highest echelons of political power in Cilicia. By disposing of his rivals, perpetuating the fiction of a harmonious union of the Ṛubenean and Het'umean dynasties, and patronizing local power brokers, Kostandin achieved the political capital necessary to check the domineering overtures of the Pope and the neighboring crusader states.

From this point, the chapter will move on to consider the complementary roles played by Zapēl as queen and Het'um as king. In spite of her designation as Lewon's heir, the primary sources suggest that Zapēl's authority was meant to be substantially restricted relative to her predecessors, as evidenced by her extreme youth and gender. As a result, the primary sources' biographies of Zapēl discuss her marriage to Philip of Antioch, becoming widowed, fleeing Kostandin's custody and being besieged by him, and finally marrying Het'um with little regard for her thoughts or feelings on the matter. In the midst of her practical disenfranchisement, however, the primary source also makes clear her indispensability to the continuation of Armenian kingship in the Mediterranean, as Lewon's heir.

Het'um I, on the other hand, projects the image of a shrewd, energetic, and proactive monarch in the primary sources. His filial connection to the regent may have served as the initial justification for his enthronement. But while the sources highlight a perpetual fidelity to his father's designs, descriptions of the adult Het'um's actions and temperament also convey the king's boldness as a ruler in his own right. Through deeds, such as his diplomatic sojourn to the Mongol capital as well as his active participation in the kingdom's wars, Het'um embodied the

characteristics of a heroic and zealous king. Although Het'um lacked the dynastic prerequisites for taking the crown, the diplomatic role that he played was incredibly important to this reimagining of Armenian kingship. His coronation as King of the Armenians allowed for Zapēl's inheritance to be achieved, while simultaneously satisfying contemporary sensibilities surrounding the gendered dynamics of rule.

2.2 Kostandin of Papeṛon: From Regent to Architect of a Restructured Kingship

Throughout his reign, both as baron and king, Lewon I aligned himself with the lucrative network of trade and military collaboration established by the crusaders. As a result of this orientation, Lewon distinguished his family's prestige and authority from those of his rivals in Cilicia. In contrast to this outward focus, Kostandin directed his energies toward courting local elites to fuel his political aims. Kostandin's first appearance in contemporary primary sources is in the post-Lewon interregnum, following the death of one of the king's chosen regents, Sir Adam, and the arrival of the disinherited royal claimant Raymond-Ruben to Cilicia.[130] The *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat portrays this scene of disinheritance as being heavily influenced by the Cilician elites. The *Chronicle* writes:

> When the Lord God gives you a child, make them your heir, and free us of the pact that we had made with Ṛuben, and seal one with your daughter, and we shall serve her as though she were a boy. What you have done for Ṛuben is sufficient, since you have established him on the throne of their patrimony. And the king approved of the words of his princes.[131]

[130] The claimant to the throne is named as Ṛuben in the chronicle attributed to Smbat. However, in most secondary scholarship he is known by Raymond-Ṛuben in order to clarify that he is the son of Count Raymond IV of Tripoli. I will also refer to him as Raymond-Ṛuben, unless otherwise identified in the primary source being referenced.

[131] և իշխանքն իւր նոյնպէս տային նմա խորհուրդ, թէ յորժամ ետ տէր Աստուած զաւակ յերանաց քոց՝ արա զնա տէր ժառանգութեան քո և լոյծ զերդումն մեր զոր արարեալ եմք Ըռովբինի, և կապեա

While the idea for the king to replace his heir with a child of his body conveys the princes' fidelity toward Lewon and respect for his royal bearing, the suggestion may also carry a more prosaic motivation. Over the course of his reign, Lewon's diplomatic connections had led to an excessive degree of Latin influence over Cilician politics to the detriment of the local elites. For example, Lewon's submission to Papal authority—in addition to undermining the Armenian clergy in Cilicia— made him vulnerable to the threat of excommunication, whose weight was felt in due course during a land dispute with the Knights Templar.[132] Additionally, Raymond-Ruben's selection as Lewon's heir resulted from the resolution of a conflict between Lewon and Bohemond III of Antioch, which was mediated by Prince Henry of Jerusalem.[133] Claude Cahen comments on the significance of this agreement to the Pope in his *La Syrie du Nord*, in which the Pope writes a letter to Lewon after hearing of the birth of Zapēl, in which he congratulates the king for maintaining Raymond-Ruben as his heir.[134] Although this letter underscores the Pope's concern for the future of the Cilician throne, it is telling that he offered no meaningful resistance to Bohemond IV's usurpation of Antioch from Raymond-Ruben—despite the latter's rule being a crucial stipulation to the original agreement.[135] This selective involvement suggests a deliberate

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ընդ դստեր քո, և մեք ծառայեմք նմա որպէս արու զաւակի, և բաւական է Ըռովբինի զոր արարեր և հաստատեցեր զնա յաթոռ հայրենեաց իւրոց: Եւ թագաւորն հաւանեցաւ ի բանս իշխանաց իւրոց: Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 220.

[132] Mary Nickerson Hardwicke, "The Crusader States, 1192–1243," in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 2: *The Later Crusades, 1189–1311*, eds. Robert Lee Wolff and Harry W. Hazard (University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 537.

[133] Smbat, *Taregirk'*, 206-207.

[134] Claude Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque d'Antioche* (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1940), 630.

[135] For Raymond-Ruben's claim on Antioch see, Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 206-207, 214.

effort to secure Cilicia as a Papal dependency, as Antioch's alignment was ensured in either scenario.

The ability of the Pope and various crusader powers to circumscribe the development of Cilician kingship appeared to come to a climax following Lewon's death and Raymond-Ruben's play for the throne. The primary sources identify the backers of the would-be king of the Armenians: the Pope —through his legate Pelagius—, the Knights Hospitaller, and Raymond-Ruben, stepfather Vahram the lord of Korikos.[136] These supporters would have presaged a significant reorganization of the political hierarchy to the local elites of Cilicia. Pelagius' involvement promised a greater degree of Papal authority in the Cilician court, whereas the Hospitallers' assistance implied compensating the order with lands and fortresses that would need to be alienated from their current lords. It was in the midst of this crisis that Kostandin of Paperon made his own bid for power.

Capitalizing on the power vacuum and consternation caused by the death of Sir Adam and the impending crusader invasion, the Lord of Paperon successfully raised an army and thwarted Raymond-Ruben's attempt to seize the throne. The description of his victory in the *Versified History of the Ṛubeneans*, written by Vahram Rabuni, provides a particularly revealing glimpse of the priorities of the kingdom and the conventions of contemporary historiography during this time.

> She who remained as the heiress,
> Was proclaimed with the name Zapēl,
> To whom the princes submitted

[136] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 223; Samuel James Wilson, "The Latin Principality of Antioch and Its Relationship with the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, 1188-1268" (PhD diss., Nottingham Trent University, 2016), 30.

With an oath, the baron installed her.
But disorder came upon the land
Because Prince Ṛuben came.
Many princes joined him,
And he set his eye on the lordship.
First Tarson was conquered
And he marched on Msis.
But Kostandin came with an army
And fell upon him.
And he seized Tarson
And persuading him and his princes,
He imprisoned all of them
Many of whom died there.
But Kostandin was invigorated.
He held his barony.
He exalted the Church,
And honored its minister.[137]

What is striking in this excerpt, aside from the caprice of the nobles, is the framing of the conflict between Kostandin and Raymond-Ruben. The idea that the Prince's arrival heralded an era of disorder reinforces the threat of external interference in the chronicle. In addition to the destruction that Raymond-Ruben himself would cause with his invasion, Vahram also draws attention to the pretender's arrival as the trigger for the other princes to rebel and take the economically important city of Tarson. This suggests that the intrusion of foreign influences, in addition to causing significant material damage to the conquered territories, would result in dismantling the feudal relationships between the princes and their sovereign.

[137] Զայն որ ժառանգ՝ էր մնացեալ, Զաբէլ անուն՝ վերաձայնեալ. Որոյ իշխանք՝ըն հնազանդեալ, Երդմամբ պարոն՝ ըզնա եդեալ: Այլ խռովութիւն՝ յերկրին անկեալ, Քանզի Ռուբէն՝ բրինձ եկեալ. Բազում իշխանս՝ յինքն յարեալ, Եւ տէրութեան՝ ակն կալեալ: Նախ զՏարսոն՝ եղև առեալ, Եւ ի Մսիս՝ յառաջացեալ. Իսկ Կոստանդին՝ զօրօք եկեալ, Եւ ի վերայ՝ նորայ դիմեալ: Եւ ի Տարսոն՝ զբռամբ ածեալ, Զնա և զիշխանսն՝ իւր հաւանեալ, Զամենեսին՝ ի բանտ արկեալ, Որք և անդէն՝ իսկ վախճանեալ: Բայց Կոստանդին՝ ըն զօրացեալ. Զպարոնութիւնն՝ պինդ կալեալ. Զեկեղեցի՝ բարձրացոցեալ, Եւ զպաշտօնեայս՝ նորա պատուեալ: Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 217-218.

Kostandin's characterization in this excerpt is as a force for order, diplomacy, and fidelity to the wishes of the late king. First, the baron's installation of Zapēl as queen after the initial submission of the princes grants Kostandin the agency to effect Lewon's will. As a result, he is singled out among the other princes as a particularly formidable, yet benevolent, figure. Second, Kostandin's direct opposition to Raymond-Ruben, an explicitly identified agent of disorder, reinforced his characterization as a restorer of stability. Moreover, his willingness to resort to nonviolent means to defeat his enemies, in contrast to the pretender's emphatically martial conquests, introduces an air of pensive flexibility that would become invaluable later in his regency. Finally, it is also important to note that Kostandin is given sole credit for the victory over the pretender. While Raymond-Ruben boasts the support of "many princes," Kostandin is not joined by a coalition. The army that he commands is not identified by the author as belonging to any prince. So the authority that Kostandin wields in this case appears to be centralized, which contributed to his mystique as first among equals—the formidable *paron paronats'*.[138] As a result, Vahram's rendition of Kostandin is as a defender of the old order in a manner very reminiscent of the late king, whose vision he is executing.

Oddly, in the version of the events provided by the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat, neither the crusader invasion nor Raymond-Ruben's claim is even mentioned.[139] Considering that the chronicle's unknown author wrote extensively about Raymond-Ruben's youth and political career as his great uncle's protege, it seems likely that his omission from this pivotal conflict

[138] Baron of barons is another title that is frequently associated with Kostandin.
[139] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk',* 223.

reflects the author's desire to preserve the pretender's reputation[140]. Instead, the only named antagonist is Vahram of Koṛikos who, together with the Armenian and Greek princes of Cilicia, rose up in rebellion.[141] In this rendition, it is the disunity of the venal Cilician princes that threatens the cohesion of the nascent kingdom. It is noteworthy that the Greek Cilician princes who had, up to this point, been largely absent from the narrative play a substantial role in the rebellion. One reason for the author's inclusion of this community could be to imply a composite nature to the rebel host, a fact which becomes relevant at the conclusion of the conflict. When a traitor to the rebels' cause named Vasil opens the gates of the besieged city of Tarsus, Kostandin takes the city in a manner that bears a closer examination.[142] The author of the *Chronicle* writes: "And in the night the doors were opened and the payl and his army entered, and took the loot of the Greeks."[143] Here, the author once again alludes to the Greek contingents of the host, this time in order to illustrate the lopsided consequences for the defeated faction.

The victorious army's rapine of the Greeks' wealth highlights, not only the enduring animosity of the Armenians, but also Kostandin's charisma and political acumen. By sanctioning the pillaging of the rebels' goods, the regent was able to compensate his allies for their cooperation, thereby contributing to their continued loyalty. Moreover, by singling out the Greeks for punishment, Kostandin identifies a group, whose vulnerability in the wake of the

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[140] For more on the authorship of the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat, see La Porta "The Chronicle Attributed to Smbat the Constable." La Porta's contention that the author of the *Chronicle* was likely a pro-Latin member of the Cilician court provides a thoughtful reason for the omission.
[141] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk',* 223.
[142] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk',* 224.
[143] Եւ ի գիշերի բացեալ զդրունսն եմուտ պայլն և զօրք իւր ի քաղաքն, և յաւար առին զինչս Յունացն: Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk',* 224.

Byzantines' retreat from the region made for an easy target. By contrast, there is no mention of any Latin soldiers in the rebel army, who could have found recourse in the Pope. By sparing the Armenian contingent of the defeated side, Kostandin was also able to demonstrate his clemency, thereby inducing their defection to his side. However, it is also noteworthy that, while the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat neglects to include Raymond-Ruben and his Latin supporters in the conflict, the narrative does portray the rebellion in terms of Kostandin as the lone figure facing down a confederate army. The *Chronicle* repeats the motif of Kostandin as an adroit statesman whose rule eventual authority over Cilicia is justified by his ability to triumph over the other elites. Moreover, the fact that he does this with a considerable numerical disadvantage emphasizes the point that his superiority is not a result of his material prosperity, but rather due to his cunning.

Following the defeat of Raymond-Ruben and the accession of Zapēl to the throne, Kostandin had secured his opportunity to direct the kingdom's political orientation. Due to Zapēl's extreme youth, Kostandin could also look forward to a comfortably lengthy regency, in which to put his plans into effect. That being said, he immediately set to work on his next major political hurdle, finding an appropriate consort for his young charge. Eventually, the decision was made to marry Zapēl to Philip, the son of the prince of Antioch. Considering that Kostandin and his allies had just fought a war to curtail the Latin world's influence on Cilician politics, forging a marriage alliance with another crusader principality would initially appear counterproductive. Moreover, because Philip had already reached his majority at the time of his marriage to Zapēl, Kostandin's necessity as a regent would evaporate.

Kostandin's reason for compromising his own authority becomes apparent after a closer look at the delicate circumstances facing Cilicia's external and internal political situations. As a result of the regent's opposition to Raymond-Ruben and his alienation of Papal and crusader support, Cilicia was left relatively isolated and vulnerable. When the Armenian primary sources introduce Philip, they often do so in passing, or clarify that he was to be a replacement for the Zapēl's Hungarian candidate.[144] Also Bar Hebraeus explains in his *Chronography* that the choice of Philip as Zapēl's husband was made after the nobles neglected to suggest one of Kostandin's sons instead.[145] It would appear from this description that Kostandin was powerful enough to expect the nobles to request one of his sons, or at least powerful enough to be offended by his snubbing.[146] The fact that they still suggested Philip would indicate that the decision was a response to the need to forge an external alliance to reinforce the kingdom's position.

It also appears that the Seljuks capitalized on Cilicia's vulnerability with a series of incursions into Cilician-held Isauria in 1221, finally culminating in their conquest of the port fortress of Kalonoros.[147] The Armenian chronicles do not divulge any such incursion or loss of territory during this time, as it may have fallen outside of the scope of their narratives on the creation of the Cilician kingdom. There are, however, scribal attestations to the damage wrought over the course of the interregnum found in the colophons of Armenian manuscripts. One such

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[144] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk',* 225.
[145] Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l-Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician, Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus*, trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge, Vol. 1, (Oxford University Press, 1932), 380.
[146] Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*, 380.
[147] Setton Lloyd and David Storm Rice, *Alanya ('Alā'iyya)*, (British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1958), 3.The fortress was renamed 'Alā'iyya in honor of the Seljuk sultan 'Alā ad-Din Kayqubād I, during whose reign the fortress fell.

colophon comes from a Gospel written in 1222 by a scribe named Grigor, working out of P‘os Anapat. In this particular case, Grigor laments the apparent political chaos following the death of King Lewon. In an excerpt of a relatively lengthy colophon, Grigor writes:

> Now, I, the lamentable and spiritually defunct one called Grigor with abject thoughts and words, beg everyone to not be reproachful of the largeness of my writing even if…[unclear]…of these bitter words. For the lawless enslaved the land of the Cilicians from all sides. For there was no king, and the princes were refractory with one another until God willed it and gave [us] a king. Thereafter there was some measure of peace in these bitter years.[148]

Aside from the self-deprecating gestures that were conventional to premodern Armenian colophons, Grigor’s words highlight the untenable instability following Kostandin’s political consolidation.[149] Although he does not specifically identify the slavers, the use of the term “lawless” (*anawrēnk‘*) is a common practice in premodern Armenian sources to refer to Muslims. Taking that into consideration, the term is almost certainly being used here to identify the Seljuks, as the Ayyubids—the other significant Muslim powers in the region—were preoccupied with their own crippling internal power struggles.[150]

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[148] Արդ, ես ողբալիս և հոգով մեռեալս Գրիգոր կոչեցեալ փցուն մտաւք և գրչաւ, աղաչեմք զամենեսեան չլինել մեղադիր խոշորութեան գրոյս, զի թեպետ և///բայց տառիս դառն. Զի անաւրէնք յամենայն կողմանց գերեցին զաշխարհս Կիլիկեցւոց. Զի թագաւոր ոչ գոյր, և իշխանսն անհընազանդ իւրեանց, մինչ Աստուած կամեցաւ և թագաւոր ետ, և սակաւ մի խաղաղացաւ յայս դառն ամքս: *Hayeren dzeṛagreri hishatakaranner ZhG Dar*, ed. A. S. Mat‘evosyan, (Haykakan SSH Gitut‘yunneri Ak‘ademia, 1984), 129.

[149] For more on the motivations and functions of premodern Armenian scribal conventions when writing manuscript colophons, see Avedis K. Sanjian, “Introduction,” in *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301–1480: A Source for Middle Eastern History* (Harvard University Press, 1969), 12-13.

[150] Stephen R. Humphreys, “Ayyubids,” in Encyclopaedia Iranica, vol. 3 (1987), accessed January 26, 2026, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ayyubids.

The exposure to invasion, and relative impunity with which the raids were conducted underscores the ominous future that awaited an isolated Cilicia. Samuel Wilson remarks on this situation in his doctoral dissertation, which investigates Antioch's relationship with Cilicia. Focusing his analysis on Cilician diplomacy's effects on Antioch, Wilson writes that, "The need to find a husband for Isabel also provided the perfect opportunity to ally with the Latins of Antioch and ensure they did not collaborate with the Seljuks against the kingdom of Cilicia."[151] However, the breakdown of the alliance in 1225 was followed by the resumption of Seljuk attacks on Cilicia—now at the urging of Antioch.[152]

The deposition of Philip from the Armenian kingship is a curious episode in the post-Lewon interregnum. In both the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat and Bar Hebraeus' *Chronography* Philip is invited by the Cilician nobles to marry Zapēl. Moreover, they refer to him in both texts as the king.[153] And yet, he was removed within four years of taking the throne.[154] The primary sources provide a several reasons for this breakdown, ranging from a purge of Cilician nobles from positions of power, to embezzlement of Cilician treasures, to outright disrespect of Armenian customs.[155] Finally, the souring of the nobility provided an opportunity for the former regent to press his advantage. Recalling the deposition of Philip, Bar Hebraeus writes:

> And thus his hatred of the ARMENIANS increased. And when they could bear his tyranny no longer, they gathered together to PÂLÎ BÂRÔN CONSTANTINE, and besought him to help them make a plan of escape from him, for they repented

[151] Wilson, "The Latin Principality of Antioch and Its Relationship with the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia," 130.
[152] Wilson, "The Latin Principality of Antioch and its Relationship with the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia," 30, 31.
[153] See Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 225; See Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*, 380.
[154] Kirakos, *The History of the Armenians* 189.
[155] For embezzling funds and disrespecting Armenian customs see Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 225; For replacing positions with Franks see Bar Hebreaus, *The Chronography,* 443.

> greatly that they had made him king. Then PÂLÎ, having made himself sure of them by oaths, made ready certain scouts and hunting men, and he rushed in on PHILIP in the night when he was lying on his bed, and he dragged him from the breast of the queen.[156]

The coup against Philip resulted in Kostandin's triumph and his consolidation of power over the other nobles of Cilicia. With one marked exception—that being the case of the regent's cousin Kostandin of Lambron—the downfall of Philip saw an end to internal resistance to Kostandin's authority.[157]

Having secured the loyalty of the nobility through their sworn oaths, Kostandin's final obstacle to binding his own family to that of the Queen was religious backing. Lewon's coronation and the establishment of Armenian kingship in the region had been accomplished through a coronation ceremony presided over by Archbishop Conrad Willtsebach of Mainz, a representative of the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor.[158] This had set a precedent that drew the nature of Armenian kingship ever closer to the transcendentalist pole, described by Moin and Strathern.[159] As a result, it would become necessary to for the king's power to be mediated through the intercession of an ecclesiastical representative. However, as Kostandin's opposition to both Raymond-Ruben and Philip illustrated, the regent could not resort to the Pope for recognition of Cilicia's monarch without undermining the authority he had accumulated during the interregnum. In answer to this issue, Kostandin's next pivot was away from the Latin world

[156] Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*, 380-381. The capitalization and orthography of the names reflect the editorial choice of text's translator.
[157] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 227.
[158] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 220.
[159] Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History," 17.

toward a local source of spiritual legitimacy. In particular, he secured his requisite mediation by influencing the election for the next Catholicos of the Armenian church.

Both Vahram's chronicle and the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat discuss this event, albeit with the styles conventional to their respective genres. In his excerpt on the defeat of Raymond-Ruben discussed above, Vahram creates a thematic link between Kostandin's triumph over Raymond-Ruben and the enrichment of the Armenian clergy. The inverse relationship between the fortunes of Raymond-Ruben and the Armenian Church implies that the former's victory would have further sapped the strength of the latter. The final line of the above excerpt that mentions Kostandin's respect for the Church's minister likewise invokes the election of the Catholicos, although Vahram reveals neither the election process, nor the candidates and the accompanying factions. Instead, the focus is on the result. Vahram writes:

> The king reconciled with Ḥovhannēs,
> And installed him on the throne.
> And the death of the king arrived,
> For which he assembled the princes.
> A little while later he died as well,
> Lord Kostandin succeeded him.
> And he took Kostandin's son,
> He who was named Het'um,
> He paired him with Zapēl,
> And anointed him King of the Armenians.[160]

[160] Ընդ Յովհաննէսն՝ արքայ հաշտեալ, եւ ի յաթոռն՝ հաստատեալ. Եւ արքային՝ վախճան եկեալ, Որ ընդ իշխանս՝ըն գումարեալ: Փոքր ինչ յետոյ՝ և նա մեռեալ, Տէր Կոստանդին՝ փոխանորդեալ. ԸզԿոստանդեայ՝ որդին առեալ, Զայն որ Հեթումն՝ էր անուանեալ: Ընդ Զապէլի՝ զուգաւորեալ, Եւ թագաւոր՝ Հայոց օծեալ: Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛuberneants'*, 219.

Here, Vahram reinforces the causal link between the Church's stability and that of the Crown. He does not follow a strictly linear chronology, as the narrative jumps back to the former Catholicos' feud with King Lewon I. However, the excerpt serves the purpose of highlighting the reciprocal relationship between two ruling institutions in Cilicia. The Crown—here represented by Lewon—restores the Catholicos, while the Catholicos, in turn, anoints the next king. Moreover, the idea that this entire episode follows Kostandin of Papeṛon's victory and subsequent glorification of the Church suggests that it was his benevolent actions towards the Church that contributed to the crowning of his son. It is significant that in Vahram's narrative the regent Kostandin does not play an active role in the elevation of his son. While he is active in the defeat of Raymond-Ruben and is a generally respectable character, he does not appear to pressure the clerical establishment to endorse his son. Rather, it is due to the reconciliation of the catholicosate and the kingship that these events are allowed to follow their appropriate course and result in the election of Het'um. Although this approach to interpreting the Catholicosate and its role in crowning Het'um is typical to the conventions of Vahram's poetic work, it nevertheless draws attention to the spiritual significance of Cilician kingship. The excerpt supports a metaphysical rationalization for the anointment of Het'um, and reinforces the spiritual authority of the catholicos to direct the coronation ceremony.

In the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat, however, the author's focus lingers on the pragmatic deliberations surrounding two candidates for the Catholicosate. They were Kostandin Bardzrberdts'i, who was supported by Kostandin of Papeṛon, and Grigor Skewṛats'i, who was

supported by Kostandin of Lambron.[161] The author makes a point to clarify that these debates took place in the first place because there was no king to make the decision.[162] In doing so, the *Chronicle* establishes that, although Kostandin was an accomplished regent, his sub-royal status could not allow for his reign to continue indefinitely. It is also noteworthy that after setting the stage and introducing the candidates, the author explains that Kostandin Bardzrberts'i was elected because, "God, who always listened to Kostandin the payl of the Armenians, listened now and established the lord Kostandin Bardzrberts'i as the Catholicos of the Armenians."[163] The choice of the title "*payl of the Armenians*" to refer to Kostandin is a provocative one, as it mirrors the royal appellation of *king of the Armenians*. Additionally, the notion that the *payl* had God's ear is another characteristic that is usually reserved for royalty or the priesthood. However, Kostandin's ability in spite of his non-royal status may suggest a transcendence of this boundary. The title *payl* is a borrowing from the medieval European bailiff, likely adopted from prolonged contact with the crusaders. While the traditional duties of a medieval bailiff were limited to the administration of a land holding, the specification of his office as being "of the Armenians" suggests a metaphorical application of the title that granted Kostandin a protective custody over the Armenian nation. As both the king and queen were in their respective minorities at the time, the honorific may have been in reference to Kostandin's regency.

[161] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 224-225.
[162] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 224-225.
[163] "…Աստուած որ յամենայն ժամ լսէր Կոստանդին պայլոյն Հայոց, և այժմ լուաւ և եդին զտէր Կոստանդին Բարձրբերդցին կաթողիկոս Հայոց:" Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 224-225.

Both Lewon I and Kostandin were known for using their respective reigns to consolidate power. However, while Lewon did so by allying with external forces, Kostandin took a reverse course and patronized supporters within the kingdom. Moreover, while Lewon consolidated royal authority within his person, Kostandin wielded power through his wards, Zapēl and Het'um. As we will discover below, Kostandin used his control over these children to formulate a variety of Armenian sacred kingship that saw royal authority divided among his two charges. By deferring to the transcendentalist worldview discussed above, in which power is mediated through a universal order, in this case the Catholicosate, Kostandin's regime saw the development of two monarchs who together formed the ideal Armenian righteous monarch.[164] Righteous kingship refers to a type of sacred kingship within the transcendentalist worldview, in which the ruler's "…status depends on his responsibility to establish the conditions within which his subjects might attain salvation."[165] In the Cilician case, this refers to safeguarding and nourishing the material and spiritual security of the king's subjects. We will see how the young monarchs embodied the bifurcated characteristics of righteous kingship, that being the Doctrinal kingship of Zapēl and the Zealous kingship of Het'um, to protect and expand the possibilities for their subjects' salvation.[166]

[164] Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History," 17.
[165] Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History," 17.
[166] Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History," 17.

2.3 Zapēl and Het‘um: Lineage, Piety, and Heroism in a Reimagined Kingship

When considering Zapēl’s reign as queen, we must first distinguish her person from her functional role in Kostandin’s schemes. Although Kostandin fought to assert her right to the Cilician throne, his actions immediately after his victory, as well as his treatment of the young queen demonstrate her position as a pawn in the political struggles of the thirteenth century. King Lewon himself, by all accounts, did not foresee his daughter ruling Cilicia in the manner of the crusader queens of Antioch and Jerusalem.

From the very outset of her reign the primary sources establish an understanding that Zapēl would not wield the same power as her predecessors. After establishing Zapēl as the new heir of Cilicia, the primary sources immediately proceed to discuss possible marriages for the new queen. The *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat, for example, writes “And when the Christian armies departed from Acre and wanted to go to Egypt, the king of the Hungarians turned to go to his home, and came upon the land of the Cilicians. And the king Lewon received him with great honor and took him to Tarsus, and was very affectionate toward him. Then they established a pact of love with one another through an alliance, in which he [the king of the Hungarians] would give his son as a groom to the king Lewon, becoming the heir to his throne. And they formalized this in writing and in oath.”[167] Although the pact was never realized, as Lewon died

[167] Իսկ յորժամ զօրքն քրիստոնէից ելին յԱքքայոյ և կամէին գնալ յԵգիպտոս, թագաւորն Իւնգռաց դարձաւ գնալ ի տուն իւր, և եկին յաշխարհին Կիլիկեցւոց: Եւ թագաւորն Լեւոն ընկալաւ զնա մեծաւ պատուով և տարեալ զնա ի Տարսոն բազում սէր եցոյց նմա, և ապա արարին կապակցութիւն սիրոյ

soon after this episode and the Hungarian king's son never came to Cilicia to marry Zapēl, the fact that the discussions between the two monarchs concluded with a foreign prince being slated to inherit Cilicia suggests that Zapēl was not intended to command the authority of her father.

In *History of the Armenians* Kirakos similarly presents the idea of marriage promptly after introducing Zapēl as the heir. He writes, "And then the monarch Lewon fell ill and, indeed, he died. He had summoned to him the catholicos Ḥovhannēs and all of the commanders, along with their armies. And because he had no son, but only a daughter, he handed her over to the catholicos and all of the princes, to crown her in his place, and to be obedient to her, and to marry her to a man of a commensurate station."[168] Although Kirakos' account makes it abundantly clear that the consent of the clergy and the nobility was of paramount importance to a smooth transition of power, the agreement between the various factions also appears to contain some contradictions. To crown Zapēl in Lewon's place suggests that she would be occupying his office as the new monarch of Cilicia, and that there would be a parity of power between the two. Moreover, the catholicos and the princes pledge to obey Zapēl, which would also appear to grant Zapēl a degree of authority comparable to her father. The use of the word obedient (*hnazand*), without any qualifiers that make note of her gender or age suggest that she should have absolute authority over the congregation. However, this boundless authority appears to be undercut by the

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ընդ միմիեանս խնամութեամբ, զի տացէ զորդին իւր փեսայ թագաւորին Լեւոնի՝ լինել ժառանգ աթոռոյն նորա. և հաստատեցին գրոս և երդմամբ: Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 221.

[168] Ապա հիւանդացաւ և արքայն Լևոն հիւանդութիւն, որ և մեռաւ իսկ:Եւ կոչեալ առ ինքն զկաթողիկոսն Յովհաննէս և զամենայն զօրագլուխս զօրօք իւրեէանց. և զի որդի ոչ ունէր, բայց միայն դուստր մի, զոր յանձնեաց ի կոթողիկոսն և յիշվանսն մաենայն՝ թագաւորեցուցանել զնա փոխանակ իւր, և կեալ նմա հնազանդ, և ամուսնացուցանել նա զուգապատիւ առն: Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 187.

addition that they should find her a husband. Because the husband would be of a comparable status, he would effectively enter the Cilician court as a new political variable. Although it is not explicitly stated in this excerpt, the implication is that he would take a hand in the governance of the kingdom, thereby limiting Zapēl's royal power.

This implication manifests after Lewon's death, when the queen marries Philip of Antioch. After discussing the circumstances surrounding Lewon's funeral, Kirakos picks up Zapēl's narrative: "And the catholicos and the princes brought the son of the lord of Antioch, who was called *Brindz*, and they gave him the daughter of the king Lewon to wife, and they crowned him as their king. And the name of the youth was P'ilippos, and the name of queen, Zapēl."[169] It is the very same power players discussed above who oversee the marriage and the transfer of power to Philip. Due to the lack of any reproach on Kirakos' part for the crowning of Philip, or any discussion of Zapēl's authority being shared with her husband, it would seem that the author perceived this event as the execution of Lewon's original plan. In addition to the power-sharing arrangement that the marriage set in motion, Zapēl's treatment by her erstwhile caregivers also highlights the lack of agency that the queen had in choosing her spouse. When describing the marriage between Zapēl and Philip Kirakos' choice to use the term "gave" (*etun*) entirely disregards the queen's will in the marriage. Although Lewon had asked his subordinates to find a husband for his daughter, the preceding requests to crown and obey her would suggest that she would have some say on the matter. But the giving of Zapēl entirely removes her consent from

[169] Եւ կաթողիկոսն և իշխանքն բերին զորդի տեառն Անտիոքայ, զոր բրինձն անուանէին, և ետուն զդուստրն արքային Լևոնի ի կնութիւն նմա և թագաւորեցուցին զնա: Եւ էր անուն պատանւոյն Փիլիպպոս, և անուն թագուհւոյն Զապէլ: Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 188-189.

the discussion and reinforces the idea that she was a political mechanism in the hands of the Cilician elites.

Sarah Lambert presents a useful analogue for understanding the power dynamic that the *History* and the *Chronicle* present. In her discussion on Isabella of Jerusalem, she points out that the primary source "Ernoul" never referred to Isabella as a queen until she was married. She writes, "Even for 'Ernoul,' the position of a queen did not depend solely on her status as heiress, but was indissolubly connected to her marriage to an *appropriate* king."[170] Lambert's observation also applies to contemporary chronicles' treatment of Zapēl. While the chronicles' authors often introduce Zapēl as Lewon's heir and discuss plans to crown her, she is only called a queen after she marries.[171] Lambert continues her analysis of this gendered dynamic by highlighting the legal framework that contributed to Isabella of Jerusalem's political dependence on marriage. She introduces the *Livre au Roi*, a legal treatise commissioned by Queen Isabella's husband Aimery Lusignan, which proposes that women should have the right to inherit titles, but that they should concede the governance of the realm to their husbands, who would in turn rule with their wives' and the High Council's consent.[172]

Levon Ter-Petrosyan also remarks on the implications of this law code in *The Armenians and the Crusaders*. He writes that adopting the law code of Jerusalem would have been very appealing to the elites of Cilicia because it would allow for more than one regent to rule the

[170] Sarah Lambert, "Queen or Consort Rulership and Politics in the Latin East, 1118–1228," In *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Boydell and Brewer, 1997), 165.
[171] See, Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 219; Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 226, Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 189; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, 380.
[172] Lambert, "Queen or Consort," 166.

kingdom at one time.[173] Moreover, adopting this legal framework would also have included the precedent on limiting the rule of women, which would have reinforced the position of the regents until Zapēl's marriage. Finally, because the law code was commissioned by the king of Cyprus and Jerusalem, who happened to be Zapēl's maternal grandfather, its adoption would also have signaled Cilicia's political alignment with its neighbor. Taking Isabella's case into consideration as a parallel, it would seem as though the treatment of Zapēl in the primary sources, rather than being an ad hoc response, reflected a conformity to a broader custom of female rule in the eastern Mediterranean.

Zapēl's initial defiance of Kostandin. Although her young age prevented her from playing as active a political role, her actions in the aftermath of her husband Philip's murder nevertheless drew the attention of the primary sources. Following Kostandin's political consolidation, Zapēl fled his guardianship to be with her mother in Selewkia. The *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat appears to follow many of the sentiments that William of Tyre expresses, as it blames Zapēl's flight on a stirring of "diabolical indignation."[174] By casting the decision to run as a malevolent one the author implies that rejecting Kostandin's authority courted disaster. The *Chronicle* also mentions that Zapēl travelled "to see her mother at the Hospitaller fortress in Selewkia," and that she "had a quarrel with the king and all the Armenians," prompting Kostandin to leave in haste to retrieve her.[175] The presence of the Hospitallers in the narrative highlights the enduring threat that the crusaders posed as a domineering influence for Cilicia, and emphasizes Kostandin's

[173] Ter-Petrosyan, *The Armenians and the Crusaders Volume II*, 241.
[174] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 226.
[175] " …խ[ը]ռովեցաւ ընդ թագաւորն եւ ընդ ամէն Հայք:" Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 226.

urgent need to dislodge Zapēl from them in order to secure his control over the kingdom. Meanwhile, the idea that Zapēl fleeing her husband's murderer is an act of hostility against her people is quite remarkable considering that she would have been a child at the time of her escape.

If Bar Hebraeus' account of Philip's murder is to be believed, Zapēl would have been present during the king's abduction. Her ostensible inclination to share a bed with him, in addition to her supposed consternation during his arrest, would suggest that she was fond of him. It is quite possible that, considering the traumatic nature of the abduction, the young queen's primary motivation for fleeing Kostandin was fear or grief, rather than treason. Bar Hebraeus, a figure who was not connected to either the Cilician court or the Armenian ecclesiastical authorities, portrayed Zapēl's escape in a more sympathetic light. Rather than judging her as being possessed of any malevolent spirit, he acknowledges her dismay at the loss of her husband:

> When the queen heard that he was dead, she was in despair, and she departed and went to the fortress of SILÂWḴYÂ on the sea-coast. And she took refuge with the Brothers (Frères), the lords of the fortress, and they protected her honourably. And her mother also came to her from CYPRUS; now she was a Frankish lady, the daughter of the king of CYRPUS. And when they gave her daughter to PHILIP, they also wished to give her also to wife, to SIR GOFRÎ (Geoffry), the lord of KÎPÂ of SERWAND, who was the son of the BÂRÔN SÛNBÂṬ, the brother (son?) of BÂRÔN CONSTANTINE PÂLÎ. And when she was unwilling they expelled her from her country and she went to CYPRUS. And at this time she returned to her daughter, and the two women lived in SILÂWḴYÂ until PÂLÎ brought them down by force.[176]

[176] Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, 381.

Bar Hebraeus' account, in addition to recognizing Zapēl's subjecthood by considering her thoughts on the death of her husband, sheds light on the agency of noble women in the royal court of Cilicia. In the course of describing Zapēl's flight from an unwanted marriage, Bar Hebraeus also highlights the similar threat facing her mother, the queen dowager Sybilla of Cyprus. The attempt to marry Sybilla to a member of his family, in addition to her expulsion, suggests that the power to dispose of the women of the court, regardless of their status was in the scope of Kostandin's regency. But the notion that Sybilla was able to reject Kostandin's desire to marry her to Sir Geoffrey also suggests that she had a greater degree of autonomy than her daughter. As an adult woman whose brother was a powerful king in his own right, Sybilla would have had the recourse to seek refuge in Cyprus in the event of her expulsion. But as the designated heir of Cilicia, a minor, and the ward of Kostandin, Zapēl would not have had those same advantages. The comparatively sympathetic tone that Bar Hebraeus' account exhibits may have resulted from the author's relative political isolation in relation to the crusaders. Although he would have had a great deal of exposure to crusader society during his time studying in Antioch and Tripoli, the absence of any substantial Latin or Armenian patronage may have accounted for the discrepancy regarding the appropriate behavior of noble women.

In spite of her personal marginalization, however, Zapēl continued to serve as the most crucial piece for the continuation of the kingship established by her father. The genealogical link, coupled with her designation by Lewon, led her to become the symbol of the kingdom's continuity throughout her lifetime. Her relegation to a passive role in no way diminished her centrality to Cilician politics. Numismatic evidence presents a very useful entry point into this

topic, as rulers have consistently used their coinage as a means of declaring their authority beyond the confines of the royal court, as well as clarifying the nature of their authority. Bernard O'Kane's and A. C. S. Peacock's exploration of the possible audiences for public inscriptions in the medieval Islamic world can provide a useful analogue for coins produced in Armenian Cilicia. In their introduction O'Kane and Peacock begin by pointing out that medieval literacy was a spectrum, and that the intended audiences for many of these inscriptions needed only to have a minimum level of literacy, and to recognize certain key words in order to grasp the message.[177]

Richard McClary discusses the Seljuks' wide use of lion and sun iconography on public and monumental architecture, as well as their coinage, in order to convey a consistent message. He writes that "The use of symbols alongside text, on both the coinage and buildings, allowed for a wider range of the mixed population of the region, many of whom were Christian and not necessarily literate in Arabic, to understand the meaning of the signs being used by the ruler."[178] In Cilicia, these techniques of dynastic messaging—textual and visual, architectural and numismatic—are perhaps at their most visible at the moment of Het'umean and Ṛubenean unification.

Upon their marriage in 1226, Het'um and Zapēl issued coinage that prominently featured both king and queen on the coins' obverse side. It is noteworthy that the both figures wear

[177] Bernard O'Kane and A. C. S. Peacock, "Introduction," in *Inscriptions of the Medieval Islamic World*, eds. Bernard O'Kane, A. C. S. Peacock, and Mark Muehlhaeusler (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 11.
[178] Richard P. McClary, "Micro and Macro Power Projection in the Medieval Islamic World: The Architectural and Numismatic Epigraphic Evidence," in *Inscriptions of the Medieval Islamic World*, eds. Bernard O'Kane, A. C. S. Peacock, and Mark Muehlhaeusler (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 50.

crowns, are facing each other, and are both grasping a cross that vertically bisects the coin. Around the image of their union is the inscription on the coin, which states “The Power is God’s” ԿԱՐՈՂՈՒԹԻՒՆՆ ԱՅ Է. The shared space on the coin highlights the shared rule of the couple. Although it is Zapēl who has the right to rule through her descent from Lewon and her designation as heir, including Het‘um on the coin next to her implies a parity between the figures.

Whereas the obverse of the coin highlights the equality in status between Het‘um and Zapēl, the opposite side of the coin alters this message. On the coin’s reverse side is a crowned lion holding a cross. The inscription states “Het‘um King of the Armenians” ՀԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ ՀԱՅՈՑ.



Figure 1: Silver Tram and Queen Zapēl and King Het‘um I.[179]

[179]Cilician Armenia, Het‘um I and Zabel, silver tram, Sis mint, ca. 1226–1270, American Numismatic Society, 0000.999.7877. https://numismatics.org/collection/0000.999.7877.

The lion, accompanied by the declaration of only Het‘um as the ruler, likewise endeavors to bolster Het‘um’s kingly legitimacy. However, unlike the coin’s obverse, which relies on borrowing Zapēl’s legitimacy, the reverse casts Het‘um as a Ṛubenean king in his own right. Considering the silver tram below, which was minted during the reign of Lewon I, reveals several textual and iconographic parallels that it shares with the Zapēl-Het‘um coin above. While it is the coin’s obverse that claims Lewon’s status and the reverse hailing God’s power, both coins contain very similar wording. As stated above, this standardization may have served to connect with the partially literate populace that handled these coins. By recognizing the words, such a *t‘agawor*, the holder of these coins may have been able to parse out its message. The fact that the texts are on opposite sides of the respective coins may have been a tactful decision. Writing Het‘um’s exclusive claim to kingship on the side of the coin that attempted to convey his kingship through the legitimacy of another may have confused the issue.



Figure 2: Silver Tram of King Lewon I. [180]

McCleary also discusses the propensity of rulers to include elements of earlier dynasties in carving out their authority. For example, he introduces the case of the QaraKhanids of central Asia, and the ways in which their coinage conveyed a sense of continuity with the preceding dynasty, as well as a gesture towards their recent conversion to Islam. McClary points out that the coins issued by the QaraKhanids were inscribed with the Quranic passage 9:33 around their edges, which were a nod to Abd al-Malik's currency reform and a continuation of an inscription practiced by their Samanid predecessors.[181] Similarly, the inclusion of the lion on the reverse of the Cilician coin maintains numismatic continuity with the previous Ṛubenean dynasty. Including Het'um's claim as king of the Armenians on the side of the coin with the lion's icon suggests that Het'um was a rightful heir to Lewon's throne. Het'um's task to associate with his predecessor was decidedly simpler than that of the QaraKhanids, however. It is with the benefit

[180] Cilician Armenia, Leo I, silver tram (type), ca. 1198–1219, American Numismatic Society Online Catalogue, numisatics.org.
[181] McClary, "Micro and Macro Power Projection in the Medieval Islamic World," 44.

of having Zapēl as a co-ruler on their coin, that the Het'um was able to pretend to such laurels. Paul Bedoukian expands on the use of Zapēl's image on this coin. In his *Coinage of Cilician Armenia*, Bedoukian provides a survey of Cilician history, while compiling a detailed catalog of the variety of coins issued throughout the life of the Cilician kingdom. During his discussion on the Het'um-Zapēl coins, he writes, "It is noteworthy that although Zapēl died in 1252, all of Hetoum's silver coins bear the image of both the king and queen, indicating that he continued to strike coins of this design until the end of his reign in 1270."[182] Het'um's reign as king was as long as it was eventful. In his 44 years on the throne he had traveled to Karakorum, warred and made peace with Cilicia's neighbors, and coordinated with Hulagu Khan in his campaigns against the Abbasid Caliphate, the Ayyubid Emirates, and the Mamluk Sultanate. Throughout his deep involvement in these deeds, he would have gained a reputation to rival that of Lewon Ṛubenean. The fact that Het'um felt the need to mint coins featuring his late wife's image on it until the end of his reign stands as a testament to her power as a source of legitimacy, and to the fragility of his own position 26 years into his reign.

We can see the enduring prestige and centrality of Zapēl's genealogy beyond the sphere of numismatics. Zapēl is also invoked in several times in the Golden bulls issued by Cilicia, through which the kingdom made major domestic and foreign policy decisions. For example, in 1236 Het'um and Zapēl granted the fortress of Harunia, along with a series of other properties to the Knights Hospitaller. [183] Although the Armenian sources do not discuss any direct

[182] Paul Z. Bedoukian, *Coinage of Cilician Armenia* (American Numismatic Society, 1962): 82.
[183] *Le Trésor des chartes d'Arménie, ou, Cartulaire de la chancellerie royale des Roupéniens: comprenant tous les documents relatifs aux établissements fondés en Cilicie par les ordres de chevalerie institués pendant les croisades*

involvement from the queen on ruling, the bull nevertheless invokes her name as the wellspring of royal authority.[184] This would suggest that it Zapēl's relationship with Het'um was a necessary factor for him to be able to wield the authority to issue such bulls. On a related note, while the Zapēl-Het'um coin served to declare Het'um as a king of the Armenians by leveraging Zapēl's legitimacy, the bull uses a similar approach to crown Het'um's family. In the course of referencing the pedigrees of the issuers of the decree, the bull cites the king's father Kostandin and bestows a royal status upon him, claiming that he has royal lineage.[185] However, the bull does not clarify whether this lineage results from Kostandin's proximity to his son, a royal ancestry of his own, or the near-royal prestige that he was able to cultivate as the *paron paronats'*.

Similar to the king-making efforts of the Zapēl-Het'um coin, the bull also summons the memory of Lewon. By declaring that Lewon is better known to the beneficiaries of the bull—in this case, the Hospitallers—the bull colors the decree with the historical precedent of cooperation between Cilicia and the Hospitallers. The echo of this relationship is then applied to the present exchange between the two parties. The bull implies that the Hospitallers are to expect the same warm treatment from Het'um that they had enjoyed during the reign of Lewon, overlooking the fact that their previous fortress of Selevkia was besieged by Het'um's father, Kostandin. By setting this amicable and familiar tone with the Hospitallers with the bull, Het'um is able to

et par les républiques marchandes de l'Italie, etc. ed. by Victor Langois, (Typographie arménienne de Saint-Lazare, 1863), 141–42.

[184] *Le Trésor des chartes d'Arménie, ou, Cartulaire de la chancellerie royale des Roupéniens*, 141-142.

[185] *Le Trésor des chartes d'Arménie, ou, Cartulaire de la chancellerie royale des Roupéniens*, 141-142.

assume the role of the king through a reenactment of the deeds of Lewon, with the endorsement of Lewon's heir Zapēl.

In another Golden bull from 1245 provided below, the kingdom confirms and expands the trading privileges among Venetian traders operating in the area. In it, both Zapēl and Het'um are mentioned as the royal power behind the bulls.[186] In addition to this, the nature of their respective powers are outlined a little more clearly. Het'um is king of Armenia by the grace of God, whereas Zapēl is said to be queen because she is the daughter of the previous king and the wife of Het'um.[187] While this addition may suggest that Het'um is the senior partner in the relationship because of the favor he enjoys with the divine, the mention of Zapēl's lineage, coupled with another mention the couple continuing in the tradition of Lewon with their cordiality with the Venetians, suggests that Zapēl still carried a great deal of influence as a legitimizing force of the new status quo.[188] Moreover, in this bull Zapēl's actively references herself in the first person, rather than having the king describe her role, which likewise buttresses the notion that the queen was an essential part of the royal ideology in Cilicia.[189] It also suggests a greater degree of independence on the part of the queen. Although Het'um is the first to identify himself as a signatory of the decree, the reference to his father does not carry the royal attribution. As a result, it is less impressive than Zapēl's pedigree, which also evokes the memory of a line of vigorous Ṛubeneans. Rather than suggesting a rivalry between the two

[186] *The Treasury of the Charters of Armenia, Or, Cartulary of the Royal Chancellery of the Roupenians*. 143-144.
[187] *The Treasury of the Charters of Armenia, Or, Cartulary of the Royal Chancellery of the Roupenians*. 143-144.
[188] *The Treasury of the Charters of Armenia, Or, Cartulary of the Royal Chancellery of the Roupenians*. 143-144.
[189] *The Treasury of the Charters of Armenia, Or, Cartulary of the Royal Chancellery of the Roupenians*. 143-144.

monarchs, however, the language of the bull suggests a consolidation of the two dynasties. Identifying Lewon as *our* father, suggests a symbolic adoption of Het'um into the Ṛubenean family.[190] Also, the introduction of the couple's heirs suggests a convergence of the families for future generations into symbolic Ṛubeneans. While Armenian dynasties throughout the medieval period are most frequently identified in contemporary sources through a patriarchal eponym, historiography of the descendants of Het'um most often focuses on their connection to Zapēl and Lewon. This trend in thirteenth century Armenian sources may reflect Kostandin's and Het'um's efforts to stabilize their rule by gradually blurring the distinction between the current and preceding dynastic rulers of Cilicia.

Although we have discussed the various ways that Zapēl had been useful for Kostandin's aims of controlling the kingdom and merging the Het'umean dynasty with that of the Ṛubeneans', that is not to say that the queen had no agency in the sacred kingship schema that had been developing during her reign. Earlier in the chapter, we mentioned the construction of a new kind of kingship under Kostandin's regency, in which Zapēl and Het'um would each encompass the responsibilities inherent in their respective branches of righteous kingship. Strathern discusses the development of this righteous kingship from the emerging transcendentalist worldview in *Uneartlhy Powers.* He writes that "The introduction of transcendentalism entails a shift of focus from the ontological status of the king and his ability to capture supernatural power to the question of his moral authority."[191] Michael Puett expands on

[190] *The Treasury of the Charters of Armenia, Or, Cartulary of the Royal Chancellery of the Roupenians*. 143-144.
[191] Alan Strathern, *Unearthly Powers: Religious and Political Change in World History* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 196.

this notion by outlining how this transition to transcendentalism has affected the active and sacerdotal branches of kingships.[192] The sacerdotal branch, which relates to Zapēl, is the doctrinal king, who is distinguished by their adherence to "the precepts of higher deity."[193] Throughout the primary sources, Zapēl consistently performs her royal authority by means of pious displays. For example, in Kirakos Gandzakets'i eulogizes Zapēl as someone who was particularly benevolent and a lover of the poor.[194] Bar Hebraeus expresses a similar sentiment with regard to her piety:

> And in this year, in the LATTER KÂNÔN (JANUARY), died ZABÎL (ISABEL?), the believing queen, the daughter of LÎÔN the Great. She was the consort of king HAITÛM, the son of CONSTANTINE, and the mother of the king LÎÔN (II) the Less of CILICIA. Now the goodness of this woman, and her charitableness, and her humility no man can describe [adequately]. For she used to go about barefooted in the nunneries and the churches, and however long she stood up in prayer she never ceased to weep. May God give her rest with the other holy women![195]

By embodying the Christian tenets of poverty and charity, Zapēl is able to imbue her authority, and by extension her husband's, with the moral and ethical underpinnings to establish a bifurcated righteous kingship.

Het'um's authority, while also within the boundaries of this righteous kingship, is decidedly more active and violent. Moin and Strathern write that "…a restricted form of transgressive action is permitted and even encouraged. The king can go off to war, loot, burn,

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[192] Michael Puett, "Humanizing the Divine and Divining the Human in Early China: Comparative Reflection on Ritual, Sacrifice, and Sovereignty," in *Sacred Kingship in World History: Between Immanence and Transcendence* eds. A. Azfar Moin and Alan Strathern (Cambridge University Press, 2022),143.
[193] Puett, "Humanizing the Divine and Divining the Human in Early China," 143.
[194] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots',* 365.
[195] Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*, 418.

pillage, enslave, and rape—even at times kill 'anything that breathes' (Deuteronomy 20:16)—but only if these massive ethical lapses are committed in the service of truth or, what is the same thing in biblical monotheism, in the name of God."[196] We see a similar representation of Het'um's violent exploits being mitigated to zealous kingship in the chronicles. In the chronicle attributed to Smbat, for example, Het'um goes on a raid to Aleppo in 1264, where he kills "lawless" soldiers who had come to stop him, and is able to return home happily with his loot, goods, and slaves.[197] The act of going on raids for the sake of monetary gain would not ordinarily fit into the model of righteous kingship, as it is primarily interested in the salvation of the soul. However, the fact that the violence is committed against the "lawless," which, as we mentioned earlier in the chapter, is a standard Armenian term for Muslims, provides a variety of possibilities to recast the transgressive act as something pious. The attack on Muslims can be interpreted as a preemptive strike, punishing the unfaithful, appropriating goods to expand the boundaries of Christendom, and so on. In this way, the marriage between Zapēl and Het'um allows for both extremes to coexist with one another without clashing.

2.4. Conclusion

Over the course of this chapter, we have followed the development of ideological currents that transformed the kingship that Lewon I established in 1198. Following his death, the seeds of

[196] Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History," 18.
[197] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 242.

Papal and Crusader intervention into the affairs and power structures of the kingdom bore bitter fruit. Kostandin of Papeṛon's seizure of power in the ensuing succession conflict led to a reimagining of Armenian kingship, whereby the spiritual dispensation to rule shifted from the Pope to the Armenian Catholicos. Next, by marrying his young son Het'um to Zapēl, Kostandin was able to consolidate his control over the kingdom, all the while allowing for the royal couple to convey their righteous kingship to their subjects and beyond. Zapēl's descent from Lewon, as well as her expressions of piety helped to perpetuate the notion of continuity and stability among the observers. Het'um's contributions were considerably more violent and transgressive. But they served the purpose of enriching the kingdom, while also expanding its sphere of influence. In the upcoming chapter we will see Armenian kingship come into contact with new forms of royal authority, as the Mongol conquests bring vast territories in the Caucasus, Anatolia and the Mediterranean coast under a new hegemonic order. By becoming incorporated in this new empire, the Armenian kings of Cilicia came into contact with the remaining lords of the Armenian highlands, introducing them to new avenues of imagining their royal authority that were independent of territorial claims. Moreover, we will see how Cilicia's integration into a world empire affected perceptions of their rulers' relationships to their overlords, as its nominal sovereigns competed for fealty.

Chapter 3 The King and the Khan: Reimagining Armenian Kingship in the Mongol Empire

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the process, by which Armenian Cilicia navigated the succession vacuum precipitated by the death of its first king Lewon I. The aristocratic and ecclesiastic authorities of the region addressed this problem by means of redistributing the diplomatic, administrative, and genealogical functions of Lewon's crown to three people. The present chapter will shift the focus to the political vacuum that followed the Mongol conquests of the Middle East. Beginning as a nominal vassal of the Byzantine Empire before shifting its allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire, Armenian Cilicia had navigated a hazardous and dynamic political terrain for the first hundred and fifty years of its existence. It had been able to survive the vicissitudes of the crusades and consolidate into a rudimentary kingdom by both cooperating with and competing against the various principalities of the Levant. In doing so, however, the Cilician lords' political ambitions and maneuvers had been primarily local in scope. Although there are several instances of trans-Mediterranean correspondence, such as King Lewon I's letters to the Pope, the majority of Cilicia's intrigues were limited to its immediate surroundings.[198] In 1243 this state of affairs would change drastically with Cilicia's introduction

[198] For examples of Lewon's correspondence see, Charles A. Frazee, "The Church and State in the Kingdom of Cilician Armenian, 1198-1375)," *Byzantine Studies*, 3, no. 2 (1976): 30-58.

to the Mongol Empire. The Battle of Köse Dağ saw the decisive defeat of Cilicia's ostensible overlord, the Seljuk Sultanate, at the hands of the Mongols. This watershed in Anatolia's balance of power exposed the Cilician king to an existential dilemma. In the midst of King Het'um's peace overtures to the victorious Mongols, the Cilician monarch was given the ultimatum of either surrendering the Seljuk sultan's mother, wife, and daughter–who had fled to him for refuge–or be perceived as negotiating in bad faith.[199] The king's capitulation to the Mongols' demands, while disastrous for his relationship with the rump of the Rum Seljuks, introduced Cilicia to a new imperial network that promised greater security and regional influence.

The following chapter will explore the effects that this new arrangement with the Mongols had on Cilician kingship. Drawing upon manuscript colophons, numismatic evidence, and chronicles, I ask the questions: How do configurations of Armenian rule and kingship change when Armenians become vassals to a Eurasian, non-Christian power? I argue that Cilicia's incorporation into the Mongol Empire, compounded with its active role in the latter's Middle Eastern campaigns, expanded the power and prestige of the Cilician king. This political shift was also accompanied by an ideological shift as Armenian kingship came to be defined in relation to Cilicia's new sovereign, in addition to its Mediterranean neighbors. For example, Mongol subjecthood facilitated the contact between the Cilician king and the Armenian lords of the Caucasus that introduced new ideas on Armenian kingship that expanded royal authority beyond territorial boundaries.

Building upon the ideological changes brought on by Mongol hegemony, I point out that the religious differences between the Mongol Khans and the Cilician king presented serious

[199] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 284-285; Smbat, *Taregirk'*, 226-227.
In the chronicle attributed to Smbat, it is only the wife and the mother of the sultan who flee to Cilicia.

challenges for Armenian writers to justify the vassalage of the king. I argue that contemporary Armenian writers attempted to circumvent this obstacle by means of deliberately obfuscating the power dynamics between the two and by attempting to convert the Mongol Khans to Christianity and incorporate them into an Armenian cosmic order. As a result of the ambiguities written into the Armenians' connection to the Mongols, Armenian kingship gained the flexibility to theoretically construct the terms of its own vassalage.

3.2 Het'um and Hulagu: Proactive Perspectives and Princely Pursuits

In the midst of the Mongol invasion of Anatolia and its ensuing political upheaval, the perilous situation in Armenian Cilicia saw a reversal that would propel the kingdom to unprecedented heights. Cilicia's political future looked bleak on the eve of the battle of Köse Dağ. Kostandin of Papeṛon had cemented his hold on power by installing Lewon I's young daughter Zapēl as queen and marrying her to his son Het'um. However, he had alienated Cilicia's neighbor and intermittent ally, the Principality of Antioch, by murdering the son of its prince. Kostandin had likewise spurned the Papacy by ignoring its ruling on the Cilician succession and opted to have the Armenian Catholicos preside over the king and queen's coronation ceremony. Finally, by the time of the Mongol invasions Armenian Cilicia had been reduced to a state of vassalage to the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum.[200]

Following Armenian Cilicia's effective renunciation of allegiance to the Seljuks, the kingdom entered into a phase of dynamic opportunity. Although the administration of Anatolia

[200] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 190; Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* (Venice: Henricus Lichtenstein, 1494), bk. 30, chap. 145.

would change following the transfer of power from Baiju *noyan* to Hulagu Khan, Het'um's strategy would yield demonstrable benefits immediately. Because he had offered no resistance to the Mongols, the damage caused to his territory was negligible relative to the Seljuks. Moreover, due to the indirect rule that the Mongols practiced in Cilicia—likely resulting from the latter's cooperation—the Armenian kingdom enjoyed greater economic liberties relative to the Seljuks. Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog provides a rough estimate of annual taxation figures for the two polities during the period of Mongol rule and concludes that Cilicia paid as low as 30,000 dinars a year to the Ilkhans, whereas the Seljuks of Rum paid as much as 400,000 to Baiju *noyan* in the immediate aftermath of Köse Dağ.[201] Cilicia continued to curry favor with the Mongols with the dispatch of Het'um's brother Smbat to the Mongol capital in 1248 to certify the kingdom's submission. Smbat's mission was apparently well received by Güyük Khan, and he was granted a written order bestowing Cilicia with numerous forts that had been lost to the Seljuks after the death of King Lewon.[202] In addition to this, Smbat sealed his bond with the Mongols by marrying a Mongol noblewoman and having a child with her, following the example set by the humbled lords of the Armenian highlands.[203] For his part, King Het'um also made a journey to

[201] The Ilkhanate was one of the four successors of the Mongol Empire, along with the Yuan dynasty, the Chaghatai Khanate, and the Golden Horde. The domains of the Ilkhanate spanned Iran, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia. These estimates are quoted from different periods in the history of Mongol rule in Anatolia, with the Ilkhans having a more practiced hand at civil administration compared to the initially rapacious tenure of Baiju *noyan*. That being said, the silence in the Armenian sources on taxation policies in Mongol Cilicia suggests that the burden was not unduly great. Bayesian Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 99; Charles Melville, "Anatolia under the Mongols," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 1: Byzantium to Turkey, 1071–1453*, ed. Kate Fleet (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 54.

[202] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots',* 317. Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'* (Jerusalem, 1870), 27.

[203] Smbat's child is named Vasil Tatar. Dashdondog rightly raises the question of how the Armenian church authorities reconciled the notion of polygamous marriages among the Armenian aristocracy. She concludes that the power dynamics between the Mongols and the Armenians largely dictated what the Armenian nobles would do. She suggests that the ecclesiastical authorities likely followed a set of unwritten rules to cope with these issues. In support of this claim she identifies the fact that Vasil Tatar was baptized, knighted, made commander in chief of the Cilician army, was treated with respect commensurate with the crown prince Lewon after his capture by the Mamluks, and was eventually buried in the monastery of Mlich. Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 94. Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 27.

the Mongol capital. But in his case, it was on the occasion of Mongke Khan's election as the next Great Khan in 1254.[204]

After securing an edict protecting his kingdom from the now inimical Seljuks, Het'um set out for Cilicia. It was on this journey home that he encountered Hulagu Khan, with whom he would work closely for the next ten years.[205] This introduction was not particularly eventful in the primary sources, as Het'um merely resumed his journey after meeting Hulagu. However, the monk and one-time Mongol captive Kirakos Gandzakets'i hints at their shared future, writing that Hulagu, who was Mongke Khagan's brother had taken the East for his own.[206] This terse description of Hulagu already makes clear his privileged status as the brother of the Khan, as well as establishing his ambitions for the East. Moreover, when Hulagu finally arrived to take control of Baiju *noyan*'s territory, he received a letter of recommendation from the latter praising Het'um for his involvement in the Mongol attack on the Seljuk Sultanate in 1256.[207]

This represents a dramatic reversal in fortunes for the Cilician king. It must be recalled that Het'um's journey to the Great Khan's court in 1254 led him through the hostile territory of the Seljuks of Rum, who had recently been betrayed by Het'um.[208] Because of this, Het'um was forced to cross the Seljuks' territory disguised as a commoner, often needing to rely on local Armenians for safety until he reached the safety of Batu Khan's territory.[209] However, after

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[204] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 364-372.
[205] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 368.
[206] Հուլաւուն, որ էր եղբայր Մանգու ղանին, և առեալ էր իւր բաժին զկողմանս Արևելից: It seems strange that Kirakos would associate Hulagu's ambitions with the East, considering that he would largely be conducting his campaigns to the west of the Gandzak, where Kirakos was from. Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 368.
[207] Melville writes that the cause of the attack stemmed from this administrative change. Baiju had requested more pasture land from the Seljuks so that he would have his own fiefdom once he was relieved by Hulagu. However, once this request was rejected, Baiju attacked. Melville speculates that the reason for the Seljuks refusal of more concession could have been a perception that their initial submission agreement was being violated, or that the Seljuks were operating under the mistaken assumption that Baiju wanted the land as shelter from Hulagu. Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 376. Melville, "Anatolia under the Mongols," 57.
[208] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 364.
[209] Batu Khan, who governed the westernmost territory of the Mongol Empire, was the grandson of Chinggis Khan through his eldest son Jochi. Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots*, 364.

having his position and holdings confirmed by Mongke, he attacked the territory of Rum with remarkable enthusiasm and success. The *Chronicle* attributed the Smbat describes this event in the following manner:

> In the year 705 [1256] in the month of September, came the king of the Armenians Het‘um from Mango [Mongke] who was named Khan, and if his leaving was furtive, his return through the same [area] was like that of a lion…And then in the same year, in the month of October, the king Het‘um convened a council of his family and relatives and nobles. They say that they had assembled more than 100,000 and with them they invaded the province of Rum, at the foothills of the Taurus mountains, near the city of Aṛakli, in the corridor of Ekegheats‘ and in Murand, and from there they took a great deal of cattle, sheep, horses, mules, servants, and gold. And with great spoils he returned to his own land, and they made myrth for many days.[210]

The raid on the Seljuk territories highlights the opportunism of Het‘um, who not only demonstrated his loyalty to the new regime, but also profited tremendously from a moment of administrative mismanagement.[211] Het‘um’s conduct reflects the seemingly counterintuitive potential for political flexibility under Mongol vassalage. Rather than being bogged down with the ecclesiastical disputes and succession politics that marked much of the kingdom’s past with the crusaders, Armenian Cilicia prospered during this period, in part, due to its practical utility to the Khans in matters of political and military coordination.

Het‘um once again enters the chroniclers’ narratives at the sieges of Aleppo and Damascus in the aftermath of Hulagu’s sacking of Baghdad. At the siege of Aleppo, the *Chronicle*

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[210] Ի թուին ՉԵ (705=1256) յամսեանն սետեմբերի, եկն արքայն Հայոց Հեթում յանուանեալ խանէն Մանգոյէ, և ընդ որ ի գնալն գաղտագողի անցանէր, ի դառնալն ընդ նոյնն իբրեւ զառեւծ գայր ընդ մէջ նոցա:… Եւ ապա ի սոյն ամի, յամսեանն հոկտեմբերի, աշխարհաժողով արարեալ թագաւորն Հեթում, հանդերձ հարազատօք իւրովք և համօրէն ազգայնօք և ազատօք, որ և ասէին թէ ժողովեցան իբրեւ բիւրս ժ (100,000) և արշաւեաց նոքօք ի գաւառըն Հոռոմոց, առ ստորոտով լերինն Տաւրոսի, մերձ ի քաղաքն Առակլի, ի փողն Եկեղեաց, և ի Մուրանդին, և անդ շահեցան բազում արջա(թղ. 159ա)ռս և ոչխարս, ձիս և ջորիս, ծառայս և ոսկիս, և բազում աւարաւ դարձաւ յաշխարհին իւր, և ուրախացան ոչ սակաւ աւուրս: Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk‘*, 231.

[211] This administrative mismanagement refers to Baiju *noyan*’s demand for pastureland after being relieved of his position in Azerbaijan by Hulagu. Attempting to appropriate more of the Seljuks’ territory following the latter’s submission precipitated the war.

attributed to Smbat emphasizes the closeness between Hulagu and Het‘um, as the latter answers the former’s summons immediately and is received joyfully by the Khan.[212] The theologian Vardan Arewelts‘i focuses instead on the positive effects that resulted from Het‘um’s involvement in the campaign, such as the freeing of Christians from slaughter throughout Hulagu’s conquest of Syria.[213] In both cases, the sources highlight the influence that Het‘um had accrued with Hulagu. The Ilkhan’s cheerful reaction to Het‘um’s arrival to his camp suggests that the latter’s participation provided substantial assistance to Hulagu’s ambitions. Moreover, the alacrity with which Het‘um joined the siege would have reinforced the impression that Armenian Cilicia was an energetic and dependable vassal. In terms of the king’s ability to save Christians from execution, Vardan points out both the mercy of the king and the latitude, which Hulagu granted him, to make such decisions. Although Hulagu was similarly dissuaded from indiscriminately killing Christians in Baghdad, his change of heart in that instance came about through the intercession of his wife Doghuz Khatun.[214] To have Het‘um persuade the Ilkhan to allow this similar gesture of grace suggests a degree of influence commensurate with his liege’s wife.

Het‘um’s collaboration with Hulagu in the Middle Eastern campaign, while profitable for the expansion of the Cilician crown’s domains, proved to be short-lived.[215] That being said, Het‘um continued to emerge as a consistent friend to Hulagu in the aftermath of the Battle of Ayn Jalut in 1260. Although the king was not present at the battle, the *Chronicle* attributed to

[212] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk‘*, 235.
[213] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak‘umn Patmut‘ean* (San Lazzaro, Venice, 1862), 151. The historical figure is known throughout the secondary sources as Vardan Arewelts‘i [Vardan the Easterner], but this dissertation will refer to the author of his chronicle as Vardan Vardapet. The reason for this is that this is how the author’s name is represented by the edition of his chronicle used here. That being said, the dissertation’s discussion will continue to refer to him as Vardan Arewelts‘i for the sake of clarity.
[214] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak‘umn Patmut‘ean*, 150.
[215] Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 140.

Smbat claims that he supplied soldiers to stiffen Ket Bugha's forces.[216] The author describes this scene as Het'um acquiescing to Hulagu's lieutenant Ket Bugha's order, which itself was given in defiance of Hulagu Khan's instruction to remain in place. In doing so, the author gives Het'um some diplomatic cover for neglecting to participate in the battle.[217] Vardan also contributes to Het'um's public image by writing that when the survivors of the battle found their way back to Cilicia, "…they found in him [Het'um] benevolence. Then, being given mounts and money, they went to their master contented, Tat'ars and Christians alike."[218] Cilicia's position as a checkpoint between Hulagu's capital in norther Iran and the Syrian frontier would facilitate the Ilkhans' future incursions into Mamluk territory. Although these incursions would ultimately prove fruitless in a material sense, they nevertheless offered a new martial environment in which the king could articulate his authority. Through his participation in Hulagu's wars, Het'um spent a great deal of time on the move. Whereas his father Kostandin's reign was primarily static and focused on internal politics, the 1260's proved to be a time when the king of the Armenians enhanced his reputation as a zealous king.

Cilicia's significance as a member of the Ilkhanid bloc made itself apparent in the years following Ayn Jalut. With the continued dissolution of the united Mongol Empire and outbreak of war between the Ilkhans and the Golden Horde in Caucasia, Cilicia had effectively taken up the responsibility of holding the line on the Syrian front, a task to which it was woefully unsuited.[219] Het'um attempted to launch a series of raids into Northern Syria in 1262 in the hopes of seizing more territory, but this undertaking was soundly thwarted by the Mamluks.[220]

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[216] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 236.
[217] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 236.
[218] …և ՛ի նմանէ յոլով գտեալ մարդասիրութիւն, հանդերձ և երիվարս և ռոճիկս, եկին գոհութեամբ առ տէրն իւրեանց, Տաթարք և քրիստոնեայք: Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean*, 152.
[219] Reuven Amitai, *The Mongols and the Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260—1281* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 107.
[220] Amitai, *The Mongols and the Mamluks*, 111.

Moreover, Het‘um’s inability to make peace with the Mamluks, arising from the former’s fear of arousing the suspicions of the Ilkhans, cemented Cilicia as the boundary line between the two empires.[221]

The centrality and prestige that Het‘um had secured compared to the Ilkhanate’s other vassals, allies, and auxiliaries resulted from repeated demonstrations of his fidelity and usefulness. The stability of Het‘um’s regime served as one of the strategic pillars of the king’s utility. While Armenian Cilicia joined the Mongol Empire in a state of severe vulnerability, the intervening years had seen the kingdom reconcile with Antioch and prove itself in battle against the Seljuks.[222] Meanwhile, during this same period, the Seljuks had suffered a second defeat at the hands of the Mongols following another bout of resistance and were in the midst of a succession crisis.[223] The period of co-rule that followed had left the realm in the hands of the sultanate’s advisors, leading to a lack of centralization relative to Armenian Cilicia.[224] This effectively left Cilicia as one of the only significant vassals that could be relied upon to join the Mongols in their Middle Eastern campaigns.

Het‘um’s dependability and commitment to the Ilkhans were the other major factors that distinguished him among his peers.[225] In the midst of the period of co-rule within the Sultanate of Rum, the diarch Sultan ‘Izz al-Din Kaykāus was accused by Hulagu of communicating with the Mamluks. In response, the Ilkhan ordered his brother Rukn al-Din Qilij Arslan to depose him.[226] This did not end the allegations of treachery, however, as the Seljuk courtier Parvāne not

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[221] Grigor Aknerts‘i, *Patmut‘iwn T‘at‘arats‘*, 60-61; Linda Northrup, “The Bahri Mamluks,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt.* Vol. 1, *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 279.
[222] Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 376; See Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk‘,* 231 for Het‘um’s attack on Rum; also see Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk‘* 234 for his reconciliation with Antioch.
[223] Kirakos, Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 376. Yıldız, “Reconceptualizing the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier,” 114.
[224] Amitai, *The Mongols and the Mamluks,* 158.
[225] Granted, the opportunities for conquest and enrichment, may have contributed to Het‘um’s unshakable devotion.
[226] Amitai, *The Mongols and the Mamluks,* 158.

only arranged for the execution of Rukn al-Din over charges of conspiracy with the Mamluks, but was also suspected to have communicated with the Mamluk sultan Baybars later himself.[227] From these examples, it becomes apparent that covert relations between the Mamluk intelligence service and the Seljuk Sultanate was, at the very least, plausible. In addition to this, several of the Syrian amirs who had come over to Hulagu's side in exchange for the Ilkhan's clemency defected to the Mamluks after Ayn Jalut. For example, the amir of Homs al-Ashraf Musa had deserted during the battle and was later rewarded for it by the Mamluks by having his possession of Homs confirmed.[228]

That being said, Hulagu's Muslim vassals should not be singled out as uniquely unreliable. In the Levant, the Crusaders were likewise dubious sources of support. Dashdondog writes that Mongol overtures for collaboration against the Mamluks were rebuffed, as the Franks of Palestine and Damascus did not want to aggravate the Mamluks by violating the temporary peace treaty that they had already signed with them.[229] Due to the opposition of the Pope against this breach of contract, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which would otherwise have been a likely ally against the Mamluks, instead allowed the forces of Egypt to cross its territory unmolested.[230] However, because of the recent shift away from the Papacy, the kingdom of Armenian Cilicia was not beholden to this decision. Instead, Het'um clove to Hulagu, under whose leadership he had prospered. To that end, Dashdondog writes, "Despite the fact that Het'um gained much as Hülegü's ally in terms of his confidence and territories, his solo expeditions were not profitable for him. He needed the Mongols' support and this ensured that he would stay true as a Mongol

[227] Amitai, *The Mongols and the Mamluks*, 159, 161.
[228] Amitai, *The Mongols and the Mamluks, 45.*
[229] Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 145.
[230] Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 145.

ally in spite of the failure of the Frankish states to collaborate with the Mongols.[231] This sets the stage for the ideological transformation of Armenian kingship under the Mongols. The cordiality between Hulagu and Het'um, is very reminiscent to the relationship dynamic of the *Letter of Love and Concord*, outlined in chapter one. As the warden of the Ilkhans on the Syrian frontier, Het'um seemed poised to pursue a similar relationship, in which he might serve as Hulagu's junior king of the Levant. However, in this instance that relationship would not carry Roman overtones, but Iranian.

The opportunities in Cilicia's pivot towards Eurasia as its primary sphere of diplomacy dwarfed those that the kingdom had seen in previous decades when its purview was limited to Anatolia and the Levant. The arrival of the crusaders in the eleventh century, combined with the fragmentation of the Great Seljuk Empire, supplied Cilicia with a power vacuum to establish itself as a regional power. Under Mongol domination, however, Het'um extended his influence beyond his immediate environs as a participant in a massive imperial project. Chiefly in this period, the primary source document instances of communication and collaboration between the ruler of Cilicia and the lords of the Armenian highlands. For example, at the initial submission overtures between Het'um and the Mongol commander Baiju *noyan*, Kirakos explains that it was through the intercession of Prince Hasan Jalal of Khachen that Het'um was able to negotiate his fealty.[232] Moreover, when Grigor Aknerts'i recalled the story of Het'um's journey, he mentioned the care that Het'um had for his Greater Armenian counterparts. He writes "And the Christ-crowned and pious King Het'um, hearing of the wrath that was being inflicted upon the lands of the upper east, for his love of the Christians, in addition to his own land, went with many

[231] Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians,* 149.
[232] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 285

treasures to Manku [Mongke] Ghan [Khan]…"[233] Het'um's interaction and reliance on the Armenian lords of the east were described by both Grigor and Kirakos as essential to the success of the Armenian king, not only in making it to the Mongol court but also in matters of etiquette and information.[234]

Grigor expands on this association, suggesting that the bonds formed between Het'um and the lords of Greater Armenia persisted even after the initial introduction to Mongke's court and the breaking of the Hulaguid wave. He depicts a scene set during the time of the Ilkhan Abaqa's reign, in which Het'um quarrels with his Cilician princes over the potential concession of some forts following the disastrous imprisonment of his heir Lewon by the Mamluks.[235] In this scene, Het'um reveals that he had been receiving information from the Greater Armenian lords who are present at Abaqa's court.[236] They caution him not to consent to even the smallest concession, as certain Muslim advisors to Abaqa, were secretly agents of the Mamluk sultan Baybars and were preparing to use any proof of Cilician capitulation to the Mamluks as proof of Het'um's treachery.[237] This episode is striking, not only for drawing attention to the Mamluk spy network and its concern for neutralizing Armenian Cilicia as a Mongol asset, but also for showing the extent to which Armenian rulers from throughout the Mongol realm were coordinating their efforts with one another to maintain influence at the Ilkhanid court.

Armenian writers and theologians also reacted to the potential for Het'um to forge relationships with the lords of the Armenian highlands. Vardan Arewelts'i, for example, spent a

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[233] "Իսք քրիստոսապսակ և բարեպաշտ թագաւորն Հեթում, իբեւ լուաւ զայս ամենայն բարկութիւնս որ գործեցաւ `ի վերին աշխարհին արեւելից, ապա վասն սիրոյ քրիստոնէից եւս առաւել վասն իւր սեպհական երկրիս, գնաց բազում գանձիւք առ Մանկու Ղանն…" Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 35.
[234] For more on this see Het'um's subsection in Chapter 2.
[235] Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 60-61.
[236] Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 60-61.
[237] Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 60-61.

great deal of time at writing for Het‘um at his court in Cilicia. But he also traveled several times to the Armenian highlands, as well as to the imperial court of the Ilkhanate. Through these travels, Vardan produced a *Geography* and a *Compilation of Histories*. The *Geography* is universal in nature, containing entries on the major nations in Africa, Asia, and Europe, as well as natural geographies, such as rivers and seas.[238] What is truly remarkable for this discussion, however, is the disproportionate attention that the author devotes to analyzing the geography of the Armenian highlands, which includes historical information, as well as information on its bordering nations.[239] Michael Pifer has addressed the implications of these texts on Het‘um’s royal ideology. In “The King’s Mellifluous Tongue,” he suggests that the *Geography* functioned as a means for Het‘um to tacitly project his authority over the entirety of the Armenian highlands.[240]

The commitment to expanding King Het‘um’s influence to include the Armenians outside of Cilicia has also been expressed by Armenian scribes in the colophons of their manuscripts. For example, in the colophon of a Gospel written in 1263, the scribe, who happened to be the king’s brother Ḥohannēs, referred to Het‘um as the holy king of all Armenians.[241] While there had previously been mentions by authors outside of Cilicia to Het‘um as king of the Armenians, Ḥohannēs’ use of the term *amenayn*, explicitly states the perception that Het‘um had authority over the entire Armenian people. This represents a shift in the scope of Cilicia’s political aspirations. Until the reign of Lewon I, the maneuvering of the various noble families of Cilicia appeared to relate only to consolidating control over the territory of Cilicia and settling

[238] Vardan Vardapet, *Ashkharats‘uyts‘ Vardanay Vardapeti* ed. by Hayk Pērpērean (Armenian General Benevolent Union, printed at Arak‘s Press, 1960).
[239] Vardan Vardapet, *Ashkharats‘uyts‘*, 9-50.
[240] Michael Pifer, “The King’s Mellifluous Tongue: Study, Social Bonding, and the Making of Middle Armenian as a Language of the Elite in Medieval Cilicia,” *Armeniaca: International Journal of Armenian Studies* 3 (2024), 121.
[241] “…սուրբ արքայն ամենայն Հայոց Հեթմոյ…” *Hayeren dzeṛagreri hishatakaranner ZhG Dar*, 322.

the issue of supporting the Latin Crusaders or the Byzantine Empire. While the pre-Cilician pasts of these families had intermittently been invoked in the sources, they were largely employed for the purposes of reinforcing royal claims.[242] However, the incorporation of Armenian Cilicia into the Mongol realm brought the former into contact with a variety of political entities that were hitherto out of reach. Due to consistent warfare within its home region, coupled with the various hostile sultanates and emirates that separated Cilicia from the Armenian highlands, communication with the Armenian lords in eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus had proven impractical. However, the shift of the political focus away from the Mediterranean and toward Eurasia had suddenly granted Armenian Cilicia the opportunity to reimagine the nature of its authority once again.

3.3 Friendly Vassals: Strategic Ambiguity and Imperial Diplomacy

The variety of advantages that acceptance of Mongol hegemony brought to Armenian Cilicia was not without its own set of anxieties, however. The prospect of expanding Cilician territory into Mesopotamia, in addition to Het'um's potential authority over Caucasian Armenians, left the thorny issue of Cilicia's subjecthood to the Mongols. There does not appear to be a tension in the sources regarding vassalage, in principle. The *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat, for example, describes the coronation of Lewon I in the following way: "In the year 647 [1198] in the month of January, on the day of Epiphany, they anointed Lewon as king of the

[242] For more on competitive genealogies and contested kingships see Chapter 1.

Armenians in submission to the Church of Rome and the emperor of the Almany."[243] Kirakos Gandzakets'i also portrays Lewon's elevation: "And he sent to the universal city of the Romans, to the imperial caesar and to the pope, to grant him dominion and a royal crown, for he did not want to be in submission to any nation but the Franks."[244] The use of the term (*hnazand*) is common to both descriptions of Lewon's agreement with the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor, and in both instances the meaning of the term is unambiguous.

However, when writing of similar agreements with the Mongols, Armenian writers associated with the Cilician court tended to obfuscate the nature of the relationship. For example, the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat describes Het'um's submission to the Mongols in the context of his surrender of the royal Seljuk ladies whom he had been sheltering. The author writes, "And the T'at'ar sent to King Het'um that he 'should deliver the fugitives, otherwise all of the love that you have established with us will be revealed as a lie.' He was afraid, lest the T'at'ar should pour into the land, and so he surrendered [them]."[245] In this excerpt, Het'um fears the danger that the Mongols posed to his territory. In effect, his decision to surrender the Seljuk noblewomen was an act of submission. But the phrasing of the relationship as one of love (*sēr*), suggests that the king's concern was one of sentiment, rather than ceremony. In addition to his anxieties around keeping his domain safe, the king was facing a crisis of character, in which he would be proving himself to be false either to the Seljuk sultan who entrusted his family's wellbeing to him or to the Mongols who took the king at his word. While it is ultimately his responsibility to

[243] Ի թուին ՈՒԽԷ (647=1198), յամսեանն յունուարի, յօր Յայտնութեան Տեառն, օծին զԼեւոն թագաւոր Հայոց ի հնազանդութիւն եկեղեցւոյն Հռոմայ և ըմբրուրին Ալամնաց: Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 208.
[244] Եւ առաքեաց ի տիեզերիռչակ քաղաքն Հռոմայեցւոց առ ինքնակալ կայսրն և առ պապն, զի տացեն նմա հրաման և թագ թագաւորականշ զի ոչ կամեցաւ նա, թէ այլում իւմեք երևսցի նա հնազանդ վասն թագի բայց թէ ազգն Ֆռանկաց: Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots',* 156.
[245] Եւ Թաթարն յղարկեց ի հետ Հեթում թագաւոր թէ տուր զփախստականդ, թէ չէ քո ամէն սէրն որ հետ մեզ դրիր նա սուտ է: Նա վախեցին որ Թաթարն չթցուէր յերկիրս, տուին: Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 226-227.

his own kingdom that guides his hand, the author's framing of the entire affair completely passes over the fact that Armenian Cilicia was just made into a Mongol subject. Later, writing about Het'um's encounter with Mongke Khan, the author writes, "And then the king took all of the most lovely gifts and went to the Khan Mongoy [Mongke] and gave them to him. And the Khan received the king Het'um joyfully, and granted him whatever he asked, and set his own servants to the king until he came to his land of Cilicia…"[246] Once again, the focus of Het'um's meeting with the Khan is the personal connections that the two men make. The gifts, in addition to his journey, can be interpreted as Het'um making the terms of his vassalage official with a diplomatic mission to Mongolia. However, there is never any mention of the king submitting to Mongke, but rather it is Mongke who obliges Het'um's every wish.

Vahram Rabuni, takes a similar approach when discussing the Mongols' entry into the Cilician narrative. He writes, "The king Het'um was in deliberation, for the sake of the land which he ruled, for the T'at'ar nation had appeared, and were wrathfully conquering the land, and he came in their direction. And they stayed there for four years. According to their beliefs, they took an oath and missive of love, then by grace they turned back."[247] Once again, Het'um's focus here is on protecting his kingdom. And once again, the Mongols are satisfied after declarations *of love,* (*siroy*). It is noteworthy that the term (*den*), is used here as a term can be defined as religion or sect, especially that of pagans or infidels. The idea that the profession of

[246] Եւ յայնժամ թագաւորն առեալ զամենայն ցանկալի տեսողաց ընծայն՛ գնաց առ խանն Մանգոյ և մատոյց նմա, և խանն ուրախութեամբ ընկալաւ զթագաւորն Հեթում, և զինչ և խընդրեաց ի նմանէ՝ շնորհեաց նմա, և եդի սպասաւորաց իւրոց ընդ թագաւորին գալ յաշխարհ իւր Կիլիկիա… Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 230.

[247] Արքայն Հեթում՝ խորհրդածեալ: Վասն աշխարհին՝ որոյ տիրեալ, Քանզի Թաթար՝ ազգն էր յայտնեալ. Եւ բարքութեամբ՝ զերկիր վանեալ: Սա առ նոսին՝ յուցի անկեալ: Եւ զամս չորս՝ անդէն կացեալ, Եւ ըստ նոցա՝ դենին խնդրեալ. Բանս սիրոյ՝ և գիր առեալ, Ապա փառօք՝ յետս դարձեալ: Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 220.

love here was a requirement of the beliefs of the Mongols takes the encounter in a more ceremonial direction than the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat did.

Vardan Arewelts‘i’s rendition of the event likewise dodges the question of precedence between Het‘um and Mongke. Although Vardan was not a writer of the Cilician court, as such, he was a scholar of great renown in his own time. He was a prolific writer, having written, among other texts, a history, a geography, several biblical commentaries, a grammatical treatise, and he had had an audience with Hulagu Khan as a religious representative.[248] More relevant to the present argument, however, was Vardan’s deep connection to Cilicia, in general, and Het‘um, in particular. Although he had not been commissioned by Het‘um to write his *Compilation of Histories*, he was patronized by the king to produce an exegetical text in what is now known as Middle Armenian.[249] Michael Pifer points out the tremendous impact that Vardan had on Het‘um, both in terms of his public image, as well as for his education, arguing that Vardan’s *Złlank* both bridged the divide between Classical and “vulgar” Armenian and promoted the perception of Het‘um as an “educated king.”[250] It must also be recalled that, although originally from Greater Armenia, Vardan had lived in Cilicia intermittently throughout the 1240’s. During that time, he had come to form connections with the king, as well as the Catholicos.[251] This is all to say that although the *Compilation of Histories* was not written for the king, the significant investment that Vardan had made in advocating for Het‘um would have influenced him to eschew mentioning Cilicia’s vassal status. In his treatment of Het‘um’s introduction to the Mongols, he writes, “In the year seven hundred and three [1254] the Christ-loving king of the

[248] Robert W. Thomson, “The Historical Compilation of Vardan Arewelc‘i,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989), 125.
[249] Pifer, “The King’s Mellifluous Tongue,” 98.
[250] Pifer, “The King’s Mellifluous Tongue,” 121-125.
[251] Pifer, “The King’s Mellifluous Tongue,” 120.

Armenians Het‘um went to Bataw [Batu], the great king of the north, a relative of Changz ghan [Chinggis Khagan], and from there to Manku ghan [Mongke Khagan]. And he honored him according to his dignity, and he turned back after a year peacefully to his own seat."[252] Although this excerpt is ambiguous, in terms of who honored whom, the characters with whom the text juxtaposes Het‘um are presented as a truly august cast indeed. This alone elevates the status of Het‘um as someone who merits attention from figures such as “the great king of the north.” And more importantly, even if it was Het‘um who was bestowing an appropriate amount of respect on Mongke Khagan, there is still no mention of his subordination to him.

However, this approach to depicting Het‘um’s vassalage as a gesture of mutual love and respect was not universal in the Armenian primary sources. Writers, particularly those who were not as close to Het‘um and were not affiliated with his court did explicitly state that the king was in submission. Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, for example, wrote “Once this [battle] took place, Het‘um the king, who ruled the land of Cilicia and the neighboring provinces, seeing that the sultan was defeated before them [the Mongols], sent envoys and worthy offerings, to establish an oath of peace and to place him in submission to them.”[253] In addition to the use of the word *in submission*, (*i hnazandut‘ean*), which unambiguously defines the power dynamic between the two powers, it is curious to see that Kirakos named Het‘um as only the king of Cilicia and the surrounding provinces. This suggests that he either was not privy to the broader strategy of expanding Het‘um’s purview or he did not agree with Het‘um as the choice for a pan-Armenian

[252] Յեօթն հարիւր և երեք թուին քրիստոսէր արքայն Հայոց Հեթում չոգաւ `ի Բաթաւ մեծ թագաւորն հիւսիսիյ, համազգի Չանգզ ղանին, և անտի առ Մանկու ղանն. Եւ ըստ արժանւոյն մեծարեցաւ, և դարձաւ յետ տարւոյ խաղաղութեամբ յաթոռ իւր: Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak‘umn Patmut‘ean*, 148-149.
[253] Իբրև այս գործեցաւ, Հեթում արքայ, որ աշխարհին Կիլիկեցւոց և այնոցիկ նահանգաց իշխէր, յորժամ ետես, եթէ պարտեցաւ սուլտաննառաջի նոցա, առաքեաց առ նոսա դեսպանս և պատարագս արժանաւորս՝ դնել նոցա ընդ նմա ուխտ խաղաղութեան, և նմա կալ նոց ի հնազանդութեան: Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 284-285.

king. Although Kirakos does name Het‘um as King of the Armenians at some point in his chronicle, his most frequently used qualifier to this statement is the suffix “who rules in Cilicia,” driving home the point that his reach was limited.[254]

Grigor Aknerts‘i is another figure who names Het‘um’s arrangement with the Mongols for what it was. There is very little information that would connect him to the king. Robert Bedrosian writes that he was born around 1250, and a colophon from 1312/13 identifies him as the abbot of Akner monastery, which was among the more notable monasteries in Cilicia.[255] Nerses Akinean provides some more information on Grigor’s life, speculating that he would have met Het‘um while he was still a young initiate in the monastery.[256] Moreover, he offers that, due to the fact that Grigor never speaks of himself as a *vardapet* (doctor, teacher, celibate priest), it is reasonable to assume that he did not have much formal education relative to figures such as Kirakos Gandzakets‘i and Vardan Arewelts‘i.[257] All this is to say that his distance from both the political and ecclesiastical stature would grant Grigor a measure of liberty from toeing the line on Het‘um’s public image. Grigor writes about Het‘um's capitulation to the Mongols in the following way. “And the pious and Christ-crowned king of the Armenians Het‘um, filled with all the wisdom of his father and his godly brothers and princes, convened a council. They came to the decision to submit to the Dat‘ar [Tatar] and give them taxes and *khalan*, and not to allow them into their God-given and Christian-populated country.”[258] From this excerpt it is clear

[254] Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 317, 364.
[255] Robert Bedrosian, “Translator’s Preface,” in *Grigor Aknerts‘i’s History of the Nation of Archers*, trans. Robert Bedrosian (Long Branch, Sources of the Armenian Tradition, 2003), accessed January 10, 2026, https://www.attalus.org/armenian/pbint.htm, i.
[256] Nerses Akinean, “Grigor k‘ahanay Aknerc‘i patmagir T‘at‘arac‘ patmut‘ean (1250–1335)”, *Handes Amsōrya* 62 (1948), 388.
[257] Akinean, “Grigor k‘ahanay Aknerc‘i patmagir T‘at‘arac‘ patmut‘ean,”388.
[258] Իսկ բարեպաշտ և քրիստոսապսակ թագաւորն Հայոց Հեթում հանդերձ ամենայն իմաստութեամբ լցեալ հարբն իւրով և աստուածպահ եղբօրքն և իշխանօքն `ի խորհուրդ մտեալ՝ հաստատեցին `ի միտ իւրեանց հնազանդել Տաթարին և տալ հարքս և խալանս, և ոչ թողնուլ զնոտա յաստուածաղէն և `ի քրիստոնէաժողով երկրին իւրեանց: Grigor Aknerts‘i, *Patmut‘iwn T‘at‘arats‘*, 27

that the author did not harbor any resentment or condescension toward Het‘um as perhaps Kirakos did. His use of the term *submit themselves*, (*iwreants‘ hnazandel*) is explicit, but Het‘um is absolved of some of the responsibility for this decision due to the opinions of other Cilician decision makers that were considered.

The reluctance of the Cilician court to acknowledge its own vassalage to the Mongols, while remarkable, is not a unique situation. The subordination of Armenian Cilicia to the Seljuk Sultanate following the instability of the post-Lewon interregnum is another event that the Cilician court chronicles pass over. While the *Chronography* of Bar Hebraeus mentions the dominant position of Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Kayqubād during Kostandin’s struggle to wrest control of Zapēl from the Hospitallers.[259] Kirakos perhaps provides the most explicit mention of the Cilicians’ submission, writing “He [Kostandin] established love and union with the sultan of the Rum, whose name was Aladin [‘Ala al-din] and had many lands under his control.”[260] Even in the case of a writer who was not patronized by the Cilicia court, Kirakos’ account portrays the agreement between the regent and the sultan as a moment of concord between two rulers, rather than as a capitulation. Kostandin’s actions are depicted as demonstrations of his prudence, following his consolidation of power. As he pacified all of the elements of discontent within the kingdom, Kostandin shows his flexibility by choosing not to fight a ruler who had so many lands under his control.[261] Additionally, framing the agreement as a *union*, (*miabanutiwn)*, obscures the power differential between the two. Regardless of this reticence to be explicit in the chronicles, the vassal status of Het‘um is attested to in the numismatic record. As evidence of

[259] Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, 389.
[260] Արար սէր և միաբանութիւն ընդ սուլտանին հոռոմոց, որում անուն էր Ալադին, որ ունէր զբազում աշխարհս ընդ ձեռամբ իւրով: Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 190.
[261] Kirakos Gandzakets‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘*, 190.

this relationship Armenian Cilicia minted bilingual coins, such as those seen below in Figure 2 and Figure 3, that paid homage to its new overlords.



Figure 3: Silver bilingual Tram of Het‘um and Seljuk Sultan Kayqubād I. [262]

Table 1: Legend for Silver bilingual Tram of Het‘um and Seljuk Sultan Kayqubād I.

Armenian	Arabic
ՀԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ ՀԱՅՈՑ	السلطان المعظم كيقباد بن كيخسرو
Het‘um King of the Armenians	The Great Sultan Kayqubād son of Kaykhosraw

[262] Cilician Armenia, silver tram of Het‘um I with inscriptions of the Rum Seljuk rulers Kaykhusraw II and Kayqubad I, ca. 1228–1245, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acc. no. 2015.300.478577, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/478577.



Figure 4: Silver bilingual tram of Het‘um I and Seljuk Sultan Kaykhusraw II.[263]

Table 2: Legend for Silver bilingual tram of Het‘um I and Seljuk Sultan Kaykhusraw II.

Armenian	Arabic
ՀԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ ՀԱՅՈՑ	السلطان الأعظم غياث الدنيا والدين كيخسرو بن كيقباد
Het‘um King of the Armenians	The Great Sultan Ghiyāth al-Donia wa al-Din Kaykhosrow son of Kayqubād

The numismatist Paul Bedoukian, identifying some of the technically remarkable qualities of these coins, draws attention to the scarcity and care taken in the production of bilingual coins. He writes that less than five percent of the existing coins produced during the reign of Het‘um I are bilingual, and that all of the bilingual coins are silver.[264] This highlights a level of meticulousness in their production, which in turn suggests a highly specific purpose for their

[263] Cilician Armenia, bilingual silver tram of Het‘um I with Arabic legend naming the Rūm Seljuk sultan Kaykhusraw II, Sis mint, ca. 1240s, American Numismatic Society, acc. no. 1917.215.911, https://numismatics.org/collection/1917.215.911.
[264] Paul Z. Bedoukian, “The Bilingual Coins of Hetoum I, (1226–1270) King of Cilician Armenia,” *Museum Notes* 7 (1957): 219.

existence.[265] He also identifies a disparity in the level of artistry between the coin dedicated to Kayqubād, and that dedicated to Kaykhosrow.[266] The coins dedicated to Kayqubād, spell the sultan's name with an *alif*, whereas the coins of his successor do not.[267] Bedoukian also points out that Kaykhosrow's coins, unlike those of his predecessor, include the *hijri* date on the Arabic side, as well as the name of the mint in Sis.[268] In addition to these coins serving as evidence of Cilicia's subjugation to the Seljuks, the comparative simplicity of the first set, coupled with the misspelling of the sultan's name, suggests an urgency to the minting that would follow from a cessation of hostilities between the two powers. The fact that the Armenian sources do not mention the kingdom's subjugation to the Seljuks, given the existence of these coins, helps to establish a precedent that the chroniclers were practicing a strategic silence, thereby blurring the power dynamics between polities whose relationship would otherwise be clear. This in turn, makes the absence of mentions of vassalage to the Mongols less decisive as evidence against it, especially when one considers the dependence of Cilicia on Ilkhanid support to survive in a region dominated by the Mamluks.

Perpetuating the fiction that the king and Khan were "just friends," did not resolve the lingering insecurities experienced by Armenian writers. As the next section of this chapter will show, Armenian theologians would strive throughout Cilicia's time as an Ilkhanid vassal to situate the Mongols within a Christian cosmological framework, as well as convert them to Christianity. Failing that, the Armenian writers would double down on the fictive relationship between the crown and the Khan. The greatest example of this comes from the work of Het'um the Historian, who wrote his incredibly influential *Flowers of the Histories of the East*. Born to

[265] Paul Z. Bedoukian, *Coinage of Cilician Armenia* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1962), 84.
[266] Bedoukian, *Coinage of Cilician Armenia*, 84.
[267] Bedoukian, "The Bilingual Coins of Hetoum I," 221.
[268] Bedoukian, "The Bilingual Coins of Hetoum I," 220.

Ōshin Lord of Corycos and brother to King Het‘um I, Het‘um—hereafter referred to as Hayton for the sake of clarity—was a shrewd diplomat, Catholic advocate, historian, and strategist.[269] Becoming entrenched in the politics of the Cypriot nobility, while also leveraging this acquaintance for an audience with Pope Clement V, Hayton became uniquely placed to intercede with the Latin world for aid to Cilicia.[270] He approached this cause by means of advocating for a new crusade that would be based on a Mongol-Latin-Armenian coalition.[271] To that end, he produced his seminal text in French for the Pope called *La Flor des stories de la terre d'Orient*, often translated as *Flowers of the Histories of the East.*

Part ethnography, part geography, and part chronicle, even a cursory approach to Hayton's text will reveal the myriad attempts to distort the nature of Cilicia's relationship to the Mongols.[272] Hayton not only follows the trend set by the authors closer to the Cilician court, but also expands upon it. When writing on the meeting between King Het‘um and Mongke Khan, he writes "In A.D. 1253 when lord Het‘um, King of the Armenians, observed that the Tatars had completely subjugated all the kingdoms, districts, and territories up to the realm of the Turks, he consulted with his advisors and resolved to go in person to the King of the Tartars, to more easily obtain his favor and friendship, and try to arrange a peace treaty with him."[273] Hayton's use of the term *friendship* is not surprising here. As a text aimed at a Papal audience, the elevation of the Cilician king would serve the author's interests of making the king appear more formidable and his strategy more appealing. However, Hayton's retelling of King Het'um's audience with

[269] Roubina Shnorkian, "Hayton of Korykos and *La Flor des Estroires*: Cilician Armenian Mediation in Crusader-Mongol Politics, c. 1250-1350," (PhD diss. Queen's University, 2015). The preference for the term Hayton over Het‘um stems from the broad use of the Latin variant of the historian's name among Western scholars.
[270] Shnorkian, "Hayton of Korykos and *La Flor des Estoires*," 1, 2.
[271] Shnorkian, "Hayton of Korykos and *La Flor des Estoires*,"," 217.
[272] Het‘um the Historian, *History of the Tartars*, trans. Robert Bedrosian (Long Branch, Sources of the Armenian Tradition, 2004), accessed January 10, 2026, https://www.attalus.org/armenian/hetumtoc.html.
[273] Het‘um the Historian, *History of the Tartars*, bk. 3 chap. 23.

Mongke Khan has the king lay out seven requests that significantly increase the king's influence over Mongke Khan. From the same chapter, Hayton writes:

> With the consent of the Khan, the King of the Armenians put [seven] requests before him. First, he urged the Khan to convert to Christianity and to accept baptism together with his people; second, he requested that eternal peace and friendship be established between them [between the Tartar countries and the Christians, oe37]; third, that it be possible to construct Christian churches in all of the Tatar countries and that the Armenians be free from taxes and other burdens [that in all the lands that the Tartars had conquered and would conquer. The Christians—priests, clerks, and all religious persons—should be free of all taxes, oe37]; fourth, that the Holy Land and the Holy Sepulcher be wrested from the Turks [Saracens, oe370 and given to the Christians; fifth that the Caliph in Baghdad, the head of the [Muslim] religion, be done away with [that he would command the Tartars in Turkey to help in the destruction of the city of Baghdad and the Caliph (the chief and teacher of the false faith of Mahmet), oe37]; sixth that all the Tartars [stationed close to the realm of Armenia, oe37] come to his aid when requested; seventh that all the districts of the land of the Armenians which the Turks had conquered be returned to him. [The seventh request was that all the lands that the Saracens had taken that had belonged to the realm of Armenia and had since come into the Tartars' hands be freely returned to him; and also that all the lands he might conquer from the Saracens he might hold in peace without any dispute from the Tartars, oe37].[274]

The likelihood of Het'um's encounter with the Khan resembling the details of this excerpt are dubious indeed. In addition to the scope of Het'um's requests, there is no other primary source that corroborates this meeting. What is more dubious is that in Hayton's account, the Khan agrees to all of the terms and is baptized shortly after this exchange.[275] The terms of the request portray Het'um as a persuasive and candid negotiator, while simultaneously revealing the political goals that Hayton engendered for Armenian Cilicia. Het'um's request that the Mongols return all the land that the Turks had seized from Armenia is unclear, in terms of whether Hayton referred to Greater Armenia or to territorial losses around Cilicia. But in either case, Hayton has

[274] Het'um the Historian, *History of the Tartars*, bk. 3 chap 23.
[275] Het'um the Historian, *History of the Tartars*, bk. 3 chap 23, 29.

Het‘um effectively arguing for the use of the Mongol army as a tool for his own political ends, as opposed to the reverse. The request for the removal of the Abbasid Caliphate is likewise noteworthy, as it signals to the readership of Hayton’s chronicle—namely the Pope and those around him—that the destruction of the centralizing force of the Saracens was the idea of the Cilician king.

Dashdondog remarks on this version of Het’um’s meeting with Mongke by comparing it to similar policies the Mongols had pursued in the past. While she does not give much credence to the notion of Mongke’s baptism as the transformation that it would be perceived as by a Christian audience, she leaves room for the possibility of Mongke’s consent to Het‘um's territorial expansion. She writes that “While Het‘um was gaining some results from his cooperation with the Mongols and regaining some fortresses that had been taken from him by the Seljuks, the antipathies that existed between and within the noble families in Greater Armenia came to a climax. This situation, which was extremely common in all subjugated lands, suited the Mongols’ policy, since they were seeking loyal vassals on the one hand and aimed to disrupt the unity of the Armenian lords on the other.”[276] Mongke’s consent to returning the lands that were lost may have served a similar purpose, that being driving a wedge between the powerful vassals in Anatolia to ensure that they would not unite and rise against the empire, while also setting a precedent for rewarding loyalty.

Roubina Shnorkian addresses this event as well in her doctoral dissertation, which investigates the life and work of Het‘um of Corycos in connection to new approaches to studying Armenian Cilicia as a space of cultural negotiation. She points out that the request for Mongke’s baptism is significant because it mirrors similar requests made by the Pope of the Ilkhans as the

[276] Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 90.

price for Latin aid in future wars.[277] In doing so, Shnorkian argues that the anecdote helps to promote Armenian Cilicia as intermediaries between the Ilkhans and the Pope.[278] Whatever his purposes may have been, or the veracity of the encounter, Hayton's account establishes a perception of Het'um

In light of these discrepancies with the Mongols and the Seljuks, the question of why Cilician court chronicles shied away from acknowledging their vassalage to these powers remains. In both cases, the kingdom subordinated itself as a means of avoiding violence, whereas consenting to vassal status was done for a royal crown in the case of the Holy Roman Empire. So the contemporary historiography might reflect this unwillingness to associate the threat of violence with oaths of fealty. Shnorkian has suggested a comparatively prosaic, yet reasonable, cause for Cilicia's reluctance to admit its vassalage. She suggests that one reason for Hayton to rehabilitate the image of the Mongols was because of the Latin world's enduring memory of the destruction suffered under Batu Khan's westward expansion.[279] As a result of this, Cilician writers may also have felt the need to downplay the kingdom's reliance on the Mongols in order to avoid alienating the crusaders and thwarting any future aid from Europe. However, another reason for the inconsistency is that neither the Seljuk Sultanate, nor the Mongols were Christian empires. This quality would have been dangerous to Armenian Cilicia because it would have damaged the Christian cosmological justification for the kingdom's legitimacy. Were the Cilician king to derive his legitimacy from the grace of a non-Christian emperor, it would cast doubt on the divine source of the king's authority. As a result, maintaining the facade of friendship between rulers allowed for the Het'um and his successors to continue to style

[277] Shnorkian, "Hayton of Korykos and *La Flor des Estoires*," 248.
[278] Shnorkian, "Hayton of Korykos and *La Flor des Estoires*," 248.
[279] Shnorkian, "Hayton of Korykos and *La Flor des Estoires*," 217.

themselves as divine monarchs, while continuing to serve the economic and political goals of their sovereigns.[280]

3.4 Cilician Knowledge Production and Crafting a Mongol Armenia

While the Cilician king and aristocrats participated in the Mongols' Middle Eastern campaigns, Armenian writers reacted to their newly acquired subject status in phases. Predictably, initial impressions of the Mongol invasions by Armenian writers were despondent. Like histories concerning the Mongols written in Arabic or Persian, contemporary Armenian sources are replete with eschatological interpretations for the Mongols' arrival. Within this apocalyptic backdrop, it is noteworthy that the prophecies proposed by the *Vision of St. Nersēs* reappear. As discussed in Chapter 1, the *Vision of St. Nersēs* is an apocryphal story of a prophetic vision of the end times experienced by the fourth-century Armenian Catholicos Nersēs moments before his death. In this vision, the Armenian princes are to be brought low, and suffer under the attacks of the *Nation of Archers*.[281] But after a period of tribulation, the Roman army is set to intervene and restore peace to the land.[282] The vision concludes with a prediction of the Armenian royal throne being occupied by a member of the ancient Arshakuni dynasty, and the throne of the Armenian Catholicos being occupied by a descendant of St. Gregory the Illuminator.[283] That being said, there have been several recensions of this prophecy since it first

[280] During the reign of Het'um I's successor, Lewon II, artistic representations of the king went so far as to associate him with Jesus. For more on this topic see Gohar Grigoryan, "Manifestations of Mongol-Armenian Relations in the Royal Art of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia: Study of the Depiction of the Robe of Prince Lewon in Manuscript No. 8321 (Yerevan Mesrop Maštocʿ Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts / Matenadaran, fol. 15r)," *in Élites chrétiennes et formes du pouvoir en Méditerranée centrale et orientale (XIIIe–XVe siècle)*, ed. Isabella Ortega and Marie-Anna Chevalier (Classiques Garnier, 2017); see also Vardanyan, "The Royal Portrait in the Het'um Lectionary."
[281] *Pat'mut'iwn Srbuyn Nersisi Part'ewi Hayots' Hayrapeti*, 90.
[282] *Pat'mut'iwn Srbuyn Nersisi Part'ewi Hayots' Hayrapeti*, 90.
[283] *Pat'mut'iwn Srbuyn Nersisi Part'ewi Hayots' Hayrapeti*, 90.

appeared in the eleventh century, with subsequent modifications to the prophecy reflecting contemporary circumstances.[284] Initially, the *Nation of Archers* seemed to refer to the invasion of the Seljuks who were noted horse archers and devastated the Armenian highlands. In the thirteenth century, however, the apocalyptic group returned to the historiographic record, but this time more explicitly associated with the Mongols.

In addition to the material damage that the Mongols caused as evidence of the end times, Armenian primary sources sought to buttress their apocalyptic accusations genealogically. Grigor Aknerts'i's *History of the Nation of Archers,* for example, introduced the Mongols, as the genealogical amalgamation of Hagar, Ketura, and Esau—all descendants of Abraham who were excluded from the Kingdom of Israel and associated with its enemies.[285] Alternatively, he suggests that Saint Nersēs believed the T'at'ars were the result of Hagar's descendants mingling with those of Gog and gaining mastery over the Scythian lands.[286] In either case, the ominous ancestry of the Mongols suggests a rather bleak outlook in the event of their successful conquests. In a similar vein to Grigor's chronicle, Kirakos Gandzakets'i's *History of the Armenians* connects the Mongols, to St. Nersēs' prophecy, portending the end of days and the coming of the sons of destruction.[287] Moreover, the Mongols enter Kirakos' narrative by crossing through the Darband gates of the Caucasus, an act evoking the gate constructed by Alexander the Great in the *Alexander Romance* as a bulwark against the tribes of Gog and Magog.[288]

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[284] Pogossian, "The Last Emperor or the Last Armenian King", 466.
[285] Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats',* 11.
[286] Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 11; Grigor Aknerts'i went beyond the genealogical justifications, by juxtaposing the Mongols' attacks with various Biblical portents of doom, such as a comet in the sky, a solar eclipse, or a famine-inducing swarm of locusts; For references to the comet and the eclipse, see Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 17-18; For references to the swarm of locusts, see Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 34.
[287] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 231.
[288] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 201. For the Alexander romance see John Andrew Boyle, "Alexander and the Mongols," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (1979): 123.

Perhaps the most influential writer to reference the Mongols' eschatological connections is Vardan Arewelts'i, whose colophon in a 1248 translated manuscript of Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle* describes the circumstances leading to the Mongols' conquest of Armenia. In the colophon, Vardan provides two more Biblical genealogies for the Mongols. In the first, he once again invokes St. Nersēs *Vision*, who was supposed to have attributed the Mongols to the remnants of Hagar.[289] In the second, Vardan cites "Assyrians" who claim that the Mongols are a mixture of the lines of T'orgom, by way of Gog, and Hagar.[290] The similarities in the genealogies provided by these three writers are not by coincidence, however. In "An Unknown and Unbridled People," Zaroui Pogossian points out that Vardan Arewelts'i and Kirakos Gandzakets'i were friends with one another and pupils of a Ḥovhannēs Vanakan Vardapet, whose own periodically cited history has been lost.[291] As a result, it would not be unreasonable to speculate that their relationship, coupled with their teacher's work, would have contributed to a shared understanding of the Mongols' genealogy.[292] Moreover, Pogossian also helps to establish the connection of Grigor Aknerts'i to Vardan Arewelts'i by comparing the writers' identical descriptions of the Mongols' appearance, and then dating Vardan's colophon to well before the composition of *History of the Nation of Archers*.[293]

These acrimonious categorizations of the Mongols as the prophesied children of destruction did not encompass the entirety of Armenian historiography of the Mongols, however. Beginning in the second half of the thirteenth century, the relative peace of administration replaced the destruction and unpredictability of raids. Moreover, the shared experiences of the

[289] *Hayeren dzeṛagreri hishatakaranner ZhG Dar*, 245.
[290] *Hayeren dzeṛagreri hishatakaranner ZhG Dar,* 245.
[291] Pogossian, "An 'Unknown and Unbridled People'," 11-12.
[292] Pogossian, "An 'Unknown and Unbridled People'," 12.
[293] Pogossian, "An 'Unknown and Unbridled People'," 35. Nersēs Akinean also suggests that Grigor Aknerts'i may have access to Vanakan's history, which had influenced the work of both Kirakos and Vardan. See Akinean, "Grigor kʿahanay Aknertsʿi patmagir Tʿatartsʿ patmutʿean 1250–1335," 403.

Mongol and Armenian nobles in war led to the establishment of cordial relations with several notable leaders of the Ilkhanate. The foremost of this group was Hulagu Khan, alongside whom King Het'um fought against the Assassins of Alamut and the Abbasid Caliphate, among others. Additionally, Hulagu was known to be better disposed to Christianity, as his wife Doghuz Khatun had been Christian.[294]

The contemporary chronicles also reflect this nuanced outlook in their descriptions of the lifestyle of the Mongols. For example, in the midst of Kirakos Gandzakets'i's negative depiction of the Mongols' appearance and the strangeness of their appalling customs, he also mentioned that the Mongols abhor theft and torture to death all who are caught stealing.[295] Considering the generally disgusted impressions of the writers regarding the Mongols and the latter's apocalyptic role, it seems strange that Kirakos would add this positive trait that would complicate his broader theme. The practice of complicating the generally anguished tone found in the chronicles is also repeated by both Grigor Aknerts'i and Vardan Arewelts'i, who praise the chastity of the Mongols with regard to their wives, and the *yasax* of Chinggis Khan as a deviation from their generally depraved and deceptive customs towards Godliness.[296]

In addition to remarking on their strict discipline, Kirakos provides an origin story for the progenitor of the Mongol Empire that is much more reminiscent of Christ than of Gog. He writes, "God took the sky for his portion and gave the Khaghan the land. For they said that Chinggis Khan, the father of the Khaghan, was not born of the seed of a man, but from an unseen light, and entered from a dormer window of the house, and said to the mother, 'Become pregnant

[294] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 382.
[295] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 272.
[296] See Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 12; See also Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean*, 160; The pairing of the two chroniclers is because of the high probability that Grigor's source on the matter of the Mongols' laws was Vardan Arewelts'i. For more on this see Pogossian, "Armenians, Mongols, and the End of Times."

and you will birth a son who will be master of the land.' And they said that he was born from that."[297] While the chronicler relays this anecdote as part of a larger section dealing with the perceived frivolity of the Mongols in matters of religion, the fact that he does not offer any outrage at this blasphemy suggests that he is, at the very least, ambivalent on the possibility of the Mongol Empire being an instrument of divine intervention. The divine possibilities of the Mongol invasion make a reappearance in Kirakos' chronicle during his description of the fall of Baghdad in 1258. On this matter, he writes:

> For it had been five hundred and fifteen years since the city was built by Ch'ap'r the Ismaelite in the year 194 of the Armenians upon the banks of the Tigris river, above Ctesiphon, around five days' travel to Babylon, and it had taken everything into its kingdom, like an insatiable leech, swallowing the whole world. And now it had been rendered open in the year seven hundred and seven of the Armenians, as revenge for the blood that had flowed, for the evil that it had done. When the measure of its inequities was filled before the all-knowing God, He repaid it fairly, fully, and severely. And the haughty and maniacal kingdom of the Tajiks ended, which had lived for six hundred and forty-seven years. And Baghdad was taken on the first day of Lent, on Monday, the second day of the Month of Nawasard, which was the twentieth day of the month according to the surroundings.[298]

It appears that even the positive attitude that Kirakos expresses for the various accomplishments of the Mongols is tinged with a sense of divine violence. Pogossian remarks on this peculiarity, arguing that the Mongols—and especially the Ilkhans—take on the role of God's

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[297] …զերկինս առեալ աստուծոյ իւր բաժին և զերկիրս տուեալ խաղանին. Զի ասէին զՉանգզ ղանն, զհայր խաղանին, ոչ ծնեալ ի սերմանէ առն, այլ լոյս իմն եկեալ յաներևութից, և մտեալ ընդ երդ տանն, և ասացեալ մօրն, թէ՝ «Յղասջիր և ծնիցս որդի ինքնակալ երկրի»: Եւ յայնմանէ ասէին ծնեալ զնա: Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 272.

[298] Զի հինգ հարիւր և հնգետասան ամի էր, յորմէ հետէ շինեցաւ քաղաքըն ի Ջափրէ իսմայելականէ ի ՃՂԴ թուականին հայոց ի վերայ Տիգրիս գետոյ, ի վեր քան զԿատիսբոն, հեռի ի Բաբելոբնէ իբր հինգ աւուր ճանապարհ ի վեր, և զամենայն կացեալ էր ի թագաւորութեանն, իբր անյագ տզրուկ կլեալ զամենայն տիեզերս: Եւ այժմ ի բաց փոխեաց յեօթն թուականիս հայոց՝ տալով վրէժս արեանցն, զոր եհեղ, և չարեացն, զոր գործեաց: Յորժամ լցաւ չափ մեղացն իւրոց առաջի ամենագիտին աստուծոյ, որ հատուցանէ արդար իրաւամբք՝ անաչառ և ստուգութեամբ: և դադարեաց գոռ և մոլեկան թագաւորութիւնն տաճկաց, որ տևեաց ամս վեց հարիւր քառասուն և եօթն: Եւ առաւ Բաղդատ յառաջնում աւուր աղուհացիցն, յերկուշաբաթ օրն յամսեանն նաւասարդի, որ օր քսան էր ամսոյն ըստ շրջագայութեանս: Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, 383-384.

punishment upon the wicked.[299] While Grigor Aknertsʻi had argued in his chronicle that the Mongols had come as a punishment from God, Kirakos adds an additional layer to this sentiment.[300] When recounting the Mongols' destruction of Kars, he ends the narrative rationalizing the cessation of the Mongols' attack as the culmination of the divine punishment visited upon the people.[301] From his impression of the attack, we see that the retribution the people were meant to suffer was not necessarily total, but only according to the severity of one's sins. Having paid their fair share for the sins they had committed, the Armenians would now be free to watch the Mongols visit the rest of the world and pay each nation in kind for their respective levels of sinfulness.

This would help to explain the significance behind the continued usage of the *Nation of Archers* designation introduced in the *Vision of St. Nersēs*. Certainly, the usage of the term would carry apocalyptic connotations that correspond to the severity of the attacks. However, the original prophecy's promise of salvation from the *Nation of Archers* is absent in the accounts of the aforementioned chroniclers. Instead, the focus is upon the *Nation* itself, and its destructive capacity. The other genealogical prerequisites—such as that of the Armenians' king and catholicos—were also subverted during this time period. Pogossian points out that the popularity of the term is likely due, in part, to the relationships between Vardan Arewelts'i, Kirakos Gandzakets'i, and Grigor Aknertsʻi.[302] But the name is used by Grigor Aknertsʻi even when the Mongols are working in tandem with the princes of Georgia and Armenia, such as in his account of the Mongols' attack on Rum.[303] This would support the notion that the campaigns that the

[299] Pogossian, "Armenians, Mongols, and the End of Times," 178.
[300] Grigor Aknertsʻi, *Patmutʻiwn Tʻaʻtʻaratsʻ*, 13.
[301] Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmutʻiwn Hayotsʻ*, 260.
[302] Pogossian, "An 'Unknown and Unbridled People'," 12.
[303] Grigor Aknertsʻi, *Patmutʻiwn Tʻatʻaratsʻ*, 23-24.

Cilicians undertook on behalf of the Mongols were also punitive in nature. As the vassals of the Mongols, the wars that King Het‘um and his successors waged in the Middle East, in addition to serving as opportunities to prove one’s loyalty to the Khan, were also examples of Cilicia’s support for a universal Mongol Empire.

But positive examples of Armenian historiography on the Mongols extend beyond their capacity for punitive violence. The Ilkhan Hulagu is lauded in the primary sources as an enlightened and generous, if not venal and irascible, individual. For example, in the *History of the Nation of Archers* Het‘um is rewarded for traveling to the Ilkhan and paying homage with gifts by returning home well-laden with gifts of his own from Hulagu.[304] Hulagu is then inundated with gifts from various potentates who likewise come to pay homage, to the point where his treasure becomes uncountable.[305] This anecdote is striking because it speaks to the theme of avarice, which plays a major function in Hulagu’s story, in addition to the stories of those with whom he interacts. For example, one of the reasons given in the chronicle for Hulagu’s murder of the Abbasid Caliph is that the latter had refused to part with his gold.[306] The fact that Het‘um not only provided gifts to Hulagu, but that he also came in person to deliver them, was an indication of the monarch’s generosity and humility before such an august figure. Similarly, because Hulagu bestows gifts on Het‘um in return, the Khan shows his own virtuous bearing.

The chroniclers’ preoccupation with Hulagu and his relationship with Het‘um hints at even greater ambitions for the Mongols in terms of their relationship to Cilicia. In *History of the Nation of Archers* after Grigor reinforces the bond between Het‘um and Hulagu, he reports that

[304] Grigor Aknerts‘i, *Patmut‘iwn T‘at‘arats‘*, 45.
[305] Grigor Aknerts‘i, *Patmut‘iwn T‘at‘arats‘*, 45.
[306] Grigor Aknerts‘i, *Patmut‘iwn T‘at‘arats‘*, 40.

"When Hulagu realized that God had given him the Khanate and greatness and a great host and cavalry and everything, he commanded the construction of a palace at great cost in the field of Dar'n which they called in their language Aladagh, which was previously the summer residence of the great kings of the Armenians, meaning the Arshakunis."[307] By having Hulagu build a palace in this area, Grigor reveals the revolutionary nature of his fascination with the Khan. Considering the apocalyptic connotations behind the name of his chronicle, and the frequent eschatological associations he reinforces for the Mongols, evoking the memory of the Arshakuni dynasty suggests a subversion of the *Vision of St. Nersēs.* By having the Khan build his palace in the patrimony of the last great Armenian kings of antiquity as a result of a divine revelation, the author appears to be suggesting that Hulagu, the ostensible leader of the apocalyptic Nation of Archers, could himself occupy the position of the salvific king of the Armenians.

Associating Hulagu with the Arshakunis through the former's behavior, rather than his genealogy, conveniently circumvents familiar issues of legitimacy that confronted Armenian writers during the establishment of the Ṛubenean dynasty fifty years earlier.[308] While tenuous, there is historiographic precedence to forge this association between the Mongols and the Arshakunis. The Arshakuni dynasty ruled as kings of Armenia from 12 to 428 A.D. As a cadet branch of the Parthian Empire's Ashkanian dynasty, the Arshakunis would also have been associated with the horse archery tactics exhibited by the Mongols.[309] Moreover, the Arshakuni dynasty was particularly noteworthy in Armenian historiography because of its tumultuous relationship with Christianity. As the dynasty that was responsible for converting Armenia into a

[307] Grigor Aknerts'i, *Patmut'iwn T'at'arats'*, 45.
[308] For more on the genealogical aspects of crafting royal legitimacy, see Chapter 1.
[309] In order to assume that drawing an association between the Mongols and the Arshakunis was Grigor's intent would require establishing that Grigor was aware of the historiography on the Arshakunis from Movsēs Khorenats'i or, more likely, Nersēs Shnorhali's *Vipasanut'iwn*.

Christian kingdom following a series of divine visions and therionthropy, the Arshakunis had secured a level of mystical prestige within Armenian historiography.[310] That being said, the Arshakunis were also well known for their mercurial dispositions regarding Christianity. The Armenian chronicles covering the history of the Arshakuni dynasty are replete with examples of apostasy from monotheism.[311] This obduracy on the part of the royal family eventually led to the assassination of the very same Saint Nersēs, whose apocryphal vision introduced the *Nation of Archers*.[312] This connection between Hulagu and the Arshakuni dynasty, while conducive to forging claims of sovereignty over Armenia, also parallels their ambivalent relationships to Christianity. Because of this correlation, Grigor positions Hulagu as a figure who could have potentially redeemed not only the Mongols through his conversion to Christianity, but also the Arshakuni dynasty, whose return the *Nation of Archers* was meant to presage.

Grigor Aknertsʻi was not alone in his interest in Hulagu Khan as a potential savior for the Armenians. Vardan Arewelтsʻi, who had personally met Hulagu, juxtaposed his perceptions of him and the Mongols with the broader historical narrative of Armenian kingship. In his *Compilation of Histories*, Vardan begins his narrative with the formation of the cosmos and ends with the chaos following Hulagu Khan's death. Throughout the text, Vardan traces developments within Armenia, periodically digressing to contextualize them within the broader imperial politics in which it exists. These digressions include the conquests of Alexander the Great, developments within the Roman Empire, the birth and growth of the Sassanian Empire, the rise of Islam, and the invasion of the Seljuks, among other watersheds. In the course of this process,

[310] Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, trans. Robert W. Thomson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), 303.
[311] For more on the apostacy of the Arshakuni kings, see Pʻawstos Buzand, *Patmutʻiwn Hayotsʻ*; See also Movsēs Khorneatsʻi, *Hayotsʻ Patmutʻiwnʻ*.
[312] Cite the assassination of Saint Nersēs and the vision of Saint Nersēs.

Vardan took care to point out the frequent personal connections between Armenian kings, the patriarchs, and the emperors with whom they came into contact. For example, when describing the period of Christianization in Armenia and the Roman Empire, Vardan writes how the Armenian king Trdat III, spending his childhood in exile, eventually gained the Armenian throne through his service to the Roman emperor Diocletian.[313] King Trdat later travels to the Roman emperor Constantine, following the former's conversion to Christianity, and establishes a pact, in which the two promise to die for one another if need be.[314] From such anecdotes, Vardan establishes and reinforces a theme throughout his chronicle of a mutual, though proportional, support between the Armenian king and his imperial overlord. This theme later extends to the contemporary relationship between King Het'um and Hulagu Khan. Het'um, after settling into his role in Hulagu's invasion of the Levant, he keeps the Ilkhan within the bounds of morality by having all of the Christians that they encountered spared.[315]

Vardan's meeting with Hulagu Khan sheds much light on Armenian writers' attempts to redress their ambivalence toward Mongol overlordship. Upon being summoned to Hulagu's Qurultai in Tabriz, Vardan is amazed to see so many temporal and spiritual leaders of Christian communities represented.[316] Vardan writes that, after validating Hulagu's hunch that the presence of so many Christian leaders signified God's favor towards the Khan, he was invited by Hulagu for a private audience.[317] In the chronicle, Hulagu clarifies for Vardan that he indeed loves Christians, and even professes to be a Christian from birth and through his mother.[318] The implications of this statement are profound for the future of the Ilkhanate's relationship with

[313] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 37-38.
[314] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 40.
[315] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 151.
[316] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 156.
[317] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 156-157.
[318] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 157.

Armenian Cilicia because it introduced a pathway toward spiritual communion between the two polities. Hulagu stating that he was a Christian from birth places him on common ground with Vardan and allows for the two to forge closer personal connections with one another. This connection would allow for Vardan and other Armenian clerics to have an increased presence in the Ilkhanid court. Additionally, rather than resolving the spiritual discord between the Mongols and the Armenians by means of proselytizing the Christian faith, Vardan could couch his conversion efforts as a return to a familiar tradition.

There already exists a rich field of scholarship that engages with subject populations' attempts to convert their Mongol overlords.[319] Jonathan Brack's work is particularly rewarding in this regard, as it delves into the logic behind strategies employed by various theologians to win the spiritual allegiance of the Ilkhans. For example, in "Disenchanting Heaven," Brack introduces the interfaith debates patronized by the Mongol courts as an arena for religious interlocutors to win influence among the Mongol nobility.[320] As part of their strategy, Brack points out that these interlocutors often benefitted from the Mongols' religious outlook, which allowed for the integration of religious and ideological innovations from other traditions.[321] As a result, theologians would advocate for a conversion to their respective religions by framing the process as a return to the Mongols' ancestral beliefs.[322] While Vardan's case does not follow the format of the interfaith debate, due to the private nature of the *vardapet*'s meeting with the Khan, the encounter nonetheless granted him the opportunity to entrench Christianity within Hulagu's

[319] For example, see Brack, *An Afterlife for the Khan*; Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World: from Conquest to Conversion* (Yale University Press, 2017); Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).
[320] Jonathan Brack, "Disenchanting Heaven: Interfaith Debate, Sacral Kingship, and Conversion to Islam in the Mongol Empire, 1260–1335," *Past & Present* 250, no. 1 (February 2021): 11–53, 14.
[321] Brack, "Disenchanting Heaven," 24-25.
[322] Brack, "Disenchanting Heaven," 25.

court. Moreover, Hulagu revealing his Christian past and heritage also provided Vardan with a firm basis, upon which to frame Christianity as a reversion to Hulagu's traditions.

After relaying Hulagu's Christian credentials to the reader, Vardan then expands the Ilkhan's divine characteristics by appealing to his Chinggisid descent and demonstrable power. In the course of their private conversation Vardan is pressed by Hulagu to speak his mind, to which he replies:

> The loftier you are than other people, the closer you are to God. God established the throne through equitable judgement. God has given to every nation mastery over the land. However, until you they have been destroyers who have pitilessly laid a heavy burden upon the backs of the poor. And they sigh and weep before God. God has taken the lordship and given it to another nation. So if you enrich the land and are merciful to the poor, God will not take from you, that which he has given. He will leave it to you, along with whatever else he wishes to give to you.[323]

This excerpt is striking, not only for the way that Vardan couches his conversion attempt within a familiar immanentist language, but also for what it can reveal in terms of his own impressions of Ilkhanid overlordship. Among the characteristics, by which Alan Strathern has defined immanentism is the expectation for relations with metapersons—in this case the Christian God—to produce tangible results.[324] Similarly, Vardan highlights the observable effects that would follow from adhering to a normative standard of rule. He establishes that dominion over the world is something to be bestowed by God, rather than something that is gained by conquest or diplomacy. In doing so, Vardan implies an arbitrary quality to Hulagu's

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[323] Որչափ ՛ի վեր ես դու քան զայլ մարդիկ, մօտ ես յԱստուած. Աստուծոյ աթոռն արդար դատաստանաւ է հաստատ: Ամէն ազգի տուեալ է Աստուած տէրութիւն աշխարհի. Մինչ ՛ի ձեզ՝ աշխարհաւեր են լեալ, և աղքատաց անողոմն ծանր շալակ են դրել. նաքան յոգոց են հանել, և լացեալ առաջի Աստուծոյ. Աստուած առեալ է զիշխանութիւնն և յայլ ազգ տուեալ. թէ դուք աշխարհաշէն լինիք և աղքատաց ողորմած, ՛ի ձեզանէ չառնու Աստուած, զոր տուեալ է՝ թողու առ ձեզ, և զոր տալ կամի՝ զայն այլ տայ: Ի քո դրանս հէնց մարդ կացո՝ որ յԱստուծոյ երկնչի և զձեզ սիրէ. Որ զլալով եկած տառապեալն՝ որ աղերս չունի և կաշառք՝ ուրախ ՛ի տուն աղարկէ, քեզ յիշեցնէ. և զաշխարհս տեսանել տուր հէնց մարդոյ՝ որ յստակ տեսանէ, կուրանայ ոչ կաչառօք, և քեզ ասէ զիրաւն:
Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 157.
[324] Strathern, *Unearthly Powers*, 43.

rule. Although the Ilkhan was a great conqueror in his own right, Vardan's statement places Hulagu's dispensation as just the latest within a series of conquerors. That being said, Vardan then discusses Hulagu's potential to be more than a transient warlord by revealing a divine path to cementing his authority. Because the rulers that preceded Hulagu, whom God had empowered, paid no heed to ruling mercifully, that power was eventually rescinded. Conversely, if Hulagu were to exercise his power in a way that improved the lot of the poor in his domain, Vardan promises that his reign will not only endure, but perhaps even be further strengthened.

The relevance of Vardan's promise to Hulagu is also reinforced when one considers its practical implications for Ilkhanid rule over Armenian Cilicia. Through merciful and productive policies, Hulagu could forestall rebellions in his territories that might have arisen as a result of the Khan's otherwise intolerable exploitation. Moreover, if vassals, such as Het'um I, felt secure and supported in their relationships to the Ilkhan then they would be more willing to fight to preserve his sovereignty. We see this sentiment expanded upon by Vardan further into his conversation with Hulagu. He suggests that Hulagu allow for petitioners to bring their grievances to an appointed representative, that he might address them in a manner that would be visible to the world.[325] He recommends that this appointee also be a God-fearing and Khan-loving individual who would not be susceptible to bribes.[326] In doing so, Vardan effectively merges the immanentist traditions of the Mongols with his own advocacy of Christianity. By having the Khan's representative be tasked with ameliorating the woes of the poor, Hulagu would be courting the favor of God, which would extend the Khan's rule indefinitely. However, Vardan's stipulation that the representative fear God is more suggestive than would appear. Because Vardan later expresses consternation at witnessing Hulagu being deceived by non-Christian

[325] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 157.
[326] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 157.

clerics, to the point of attributing the Ilkhan's death to his patronage of these clerics' temples, it would stand to reason that to be "God-fearing" for Vardan means Christian.[327] Moreover, Vardan's suggestion that Hulagu "let the world see such a man," would result in Hulagu signaling his affinity for Christianity.[328] Were such a state of affairs to continue, it would couch Hulagu's merciful and beneficial regime in a Christian context, contributing to the assimilation of the Ilkhanate as a whole.

Finally, Vardan's conversation with Hulagu extends the amalgamation of Chinggisid and Christian ideologies to the very understanding of divinity itself. Following Vardan's suggestions, Hulagu claims that he had been thinking of enacting those very same measures to address the misery in his realm, and asks whether God had spoken to Vardan to give the *vardapet* such insight into his thoughts.[329] Vardan responds that he and his party did not have such abilities, and that their knowledge was gained through reading books, whereas Hulagu's divine knowledge was gained without study.[330] Vardan's obsequious reply to Hulagu's question could imply that the Ilkhan's access to divine knowledge was a result of his Chinggisid heritage. Vardan's position on Hulagu's knowledge, as well as that on the divine favor that he enjoyed, mirrors similar approaches by theologians to justify Chinggisid authority through sanctification according to their respective faiths. In the context of seeking an appropriate ruler of Chinggisid successor states Brack writes, "Securing Heaven's favour by a Chinggisid successor hinged on the latter (empirically) displaying and reaffirming his personification of the same attributes, including intuitive, divine-like wisdom, empirical and practical insight, and the exceptional

[327] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 157.
[328] "և զաշխարհս տեսանել տուր հէնց մարդոյ:" Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 157.
[329] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 157.
[330] Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean,* 157.

ability to know all religions."[331] By accepting Hulagu's retroactive claim that he already meant to establish a mechanism for hearing petitions, Vardan was able to satisfy the immanentist requirement for demonstrable wisdom and knowledge of the divine.

While Vardan's hopes to convert Hulagu were ultimately frustrated, his attempts to create a Christian Khanate in the Middle East reflected a broader strategy for the region, which successive generations would continue to pursue. After a rude introduction to the Mongols as a destructive and apocalyptic force, Armenian writers gradually came to see the nuances among the individual Khans of the various *ulus*es of the empire. These nuances became the foundation, from which writers could explore the possibility of Armenian kingship, not only surviving, but flourishing under Mongol rule. By focusing their attentions on those Khans who were amenable to Christianity, such as Hulagu, the chronicles charted a path, through which the thorny issue of vassalage under the *Nation of Archers* could be reconciled with the political and spiritual foundations of the kingdom of Armenian Cilicia.

3.5 Conclusion

The era of Mongol rule in the Middle East, while incredibly destructive, was also a moment of incredible transformation for the kingdom of Armenian Cilicia. By submitting to the Mongols without a fight, King Het'um I was able to evade having his realm experience the levels of devastation witnessed by his counterparts in Caucasia. Casting his lot with the Mongols, also altered the ideological landscape that governed his expression of kingship. This new imperial power's ever-tightening grip over the region undermined the relevance of the doctrinal

[331] Brack, "Disenchanting Heaven," 27.

concessions of his predecessors. Cilicia now had a patron who was, not only unconcerned with converting their vassals, but was also more reliable and profitable in matters of security.

Het‘um continued to war against his neighbors, but by swimming in the wake of the Ilkhanid leviathan he was able to expand his territory to a degree not seen since the days of the prince T‘oros II Ṛubenean. Moreover, Cilicia’s strategic importance saw a sharp increase during this period, as the Mamluk Sultanate emerged as a major threat to Hulagu and his successors. The presence of a friendly kingdom on the border that depended on the Ilkhans for its survival facilitated a closer relationship with the imperial center. And from this access point, Het‘um interacted with the lords of the Armenian highlands with a coordination and harmony that suggest the pursuit of an even more expansive kingship over the whole of the Armenian people.

These possibilities were not considered in a vacuum, however, and the primary sources reflect a perpetual ambivalence surrounding the subornation of Armenian Cilicia to the Mongols. By employing strategic silences and political distortions, writers associated with the Cilician court were able to forestall the admission of their king’s vassalage to a non-Christian power. In the meantime, theologians and diplomats pursued a strategy to convert their overlords, in a manner that would be familiar to scholars of Ilkhanid Iran. Although the attempts to win the spiritual allegiance of the Mongols failed, eventually contributing to the breakdown of Ilkhanid-Cilician solidarity, the period of Het‘um’s relationship with Hulagu represents a watershed in the development of Armenian Cilician kingship. The possibilities explored, both politically and ideologically, transformed Het‘um’s kingship from a crusader misfit to a champion of the Armenian people. Moreover, had the conversion efforts of Vardan Arewelts‘i been successful, Het‘um’s might have transformed kingship once again. The cyclical temporality asserted in texts, such as the *Vision of Saint Nersēs*, might have seen King Het‘um assume the ancient role of the

Bagratunis, who served as the hereditary coronants of the Arshakuni kings. If the associations connecting these Arshakunis with Hulagu Khan would have held, Het‘um could have found himself at the forefront of a Mongol-Armenian eschatological world empire.

Chapter 4 Armenian Afterlives: Negotiating Kingship After the Fall of Cilicia

4.1 Introduction

By the second half of the fourteenth century, Cilicia's formidable position in the geopolitics of the eastern Mediterranean was but a memory. The kingdom's expectations of protection from the Mongols had lost all relevance with the disintegration of the Mongol Ilkhanate that began in 1335. Moreover, the effects of the Mamluks' ascendancy made themselves keenly felt with the conquest of the remaining crusader holdings on the Levantine mainland and the emergence of new inimical Turkic beyliks, such as the Karamans, in Anatolia. The Cilician kingdom also saw its own borders recede dramatically, with the loss of the economically indispensable port of Ayas in 1337 being perhaps most disastrous for its long-term survival. From within, Cilicia also faced a great deal of political and ecumenical turmoil. The influx of Franciscan missionaries, coupled with a sustained Papal pressure to accept Catholicism, factionalized the royal court and hindered efforts at political unity.[332] As the Frankish and Catholic influence grew to the point of inheriting the kingdom of Armenian Cilicia, we see a shift in the historiography regarding the nature of Armenian kingship. Since the political consolidation of the regent Kostandin in the thirteenth century, Armenian kingship has carried

[332] This lack of unity manifested in the assassination of two Cilician kings by the barons, as well as a quick sucession of a Catholicoi. For more on this topic see La Porta "Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century."

with it an element of mediation through the Armenian Catholicos. As a kingdom, moreover, whose historiography has framed its founding in terms of Armenian aristocrats creating a new homeland for other displaced Armenians, Armenian kingship in Cilicia has also carried with it rhetoric concerning the welfare of the Armenian people. However, in this final phase of the kingdom's existence, we see these characteristics fade away. As we shall see below, the inheritance of the kingdom by the Lusignan dynasty transforms the periodically sacred kingship of the past into territorial holdings. In the ensuing pages, we will see how this change in royal ideology affects the imaginary of Armenian kingship as it approaches its end.

In spite of the kingdom's downfall, however, discussions on the forms of imagined Armenian kingship continued to develop and diverge. Among Armenian writers, for example, the memory of Cilicia endured in sentimental and nostalgic poetry, as can be seen in the works attributed to Ḥovhannēs T'lkurants'i. The author's concerns for what was lost following Cilicia's conquest, in terms of dignity, freedom, and spirituality, reflect a pensive despondency and deeply emotional interpretation to this final chapter in the kingdom's history. However, this was far from the only reaction that would manifest itself in response to the kingdom's downfall. Rather than remembering Cilicia wistfully or expressing their thoughts in poetry, some writers from the Latin West instead focused on the legal ramifications of the fall of Sis to the Mamluks. Cilicia's final king Lewon V, for example, would begin a tradition of titular kingship of Armenia that continued well into the fifteenth century.[333]

The following chapter will highlight these discussions, beginning with the twilight years of the Cilician kingdom and continuing until the immediate generations that followed. By reading

[333] For more on the tradition of titular kingship see Aleramo Hermet and Paola Cogni Ratti de Desio, *La Venezia degli Armenia: Sedici secoli, tra storia e leggenda*, trans. Sona Haroutyunian, ed. Sona Serefian, (Mursia, 2000), 111-123.

texts engaging with the fall of the Cilician kingdom that were produced by both Latin and Armenian writers, the ensuing investigation will show how Armenian kingship continued to be negotiated and reimagined after the fall of the Cilician kingdom. Armenian kingship, an institution that had been consistently negotiated throughout the lifespan of the approximately three hundred years that Armenian Cilicia existed as a political entity, would continue to be refined after the fall of Sis. Whereas previous generations saw the figure of the monarch being mediated through the interest of rival barons, ecclesiastical figures, and emperors, the afterlife of Cilicia saw the kingship's mediation reflect the more decentralized character. With the absence of a tangible seat from which the kingship could be envisioned, sovereignty was fractured into more localized debates that touched on a variety of concerns.

The following discussion will engage with these debates from two vantage points. The first is that of the *Chronique d'Arménie*, written by Jean Dardel the Franciscan friar and secretary of the final Armenian king of Cilicia. Through his survey of various historic Armenian kingdoms, we will see the tension between the perceived duty of the king to bring his subjects into union with the Catholic Church and the failure of the Armenians to return to the fold. We will also encounter a preoccupation with regaining lost territorial possessions. The second perspective we will encounter is that of lyric poetry, attributed to Ḥovhannēs T'lkurants'i, dedicated to the memory of a Cilician Armenian soldier Libarit. Through close readings of key excerpts from this corpus, we will see the author's longing and lamentation for a romanticized Cilicia that was lost due to incompetent and cowardly leadership.

4.2 Contextualizing Defeat

While the origins of Armenian kingship's fracture into increasingly localized forms across the Mediterranean and Eurasia lie at its very inception, the reign of Lewon V seems an

appropriate place to begin our discussion. Lewon V, who was the final "King of Armenia," ruled for less than a year. However, even a cursory look into his navigation of the Mediterranean's complex political minefield over the course of his life contextualizes the eventual discursive directions for the posthumous kingdom. The most extensive account of the twilight of the Cilician kingdom and its immediate aftermath comes from the *Chronique d'Arménie* written by Jean Dardel, a Franciscan friar who, upon encountering Lewon V as a Mamluk captive, while on his pilgrimage through Egypt became the king's advisor, secretary, and confessor.[334] After remaining with Lewon throughout the remainder of his captivity, he acted as his envoy to negotiate with various Latin rulers in the Mediterranean.[335] Likely due to his monastic background, much of Dardel's chronicle is concerned with the spirituality of his subjects. Over the course of his chronicle he expresses frustration with the Armenians of Cilicia who stubbornly refuse to convert to Catholicism, choosing instead to remain in their unsanctioned confession or even apostatize.[336] Moreover, he expresses a particular exacerbation with the Latin rulers of the Mediterranean, and especially of the Italian peninsula, whose venal, self-serving motivations consistently frustrate his patron's hopes for a pan-Catholic military coalition.[337] What is also apparent throughout the chronicle is the author's opinions on the Western Schism. He makes no secret of his support of the Avignon Papacy, and throughout the text, we see him treat with political leaders accordingly.[338] These details provide only a fraction of the insight that Jean Dardel provides on contemporary perceptions of tensions, both internal and external, that afflicted Cilicia until its eventual conquest.

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[334] There are two readily available versions of this text, one written in the original French and the other translated to Armenian by Karapet Ezeanc' in 1891. The following discussion will be based on the Armenian version.
[335] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 167-168.
[336] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 177-179.
[337] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 187-189.
[338] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 185-186.

Until his election as king, Lewon spent most of his life as a refugee on Cyprus.[339] Dardel writes that he had fled Cilicia as a child with his mother and brother following his uncle King Kostandin II's assassination at the hands of the Cilician barons, who had grown weary of the king's bellicose stance toward the Mamluks.[340] As the Cypriot king's kinsman, Lewon was afforded a certain degree of hospitality.[341] However, this hospitality also carried a significant amount of risk, as Lewon also had certain claims over territories under the Cypriot king's control.[342] The danger posed by these claims eventually grew to the point of hindering Lewon's journey back to Cilicia. Dardel writes that Cyprus, both under the control of Peter II Lusignan and under Genoese occupation, feared losing Lewon as a hostage.[343] The concern was that if Lewon successfully gained the crown of Armenia, he might redirect his forces to press his claims over the Cypriot territories.[344]

Lewon's assumption of power in Cilicia was fraught with communal tensions from its earliest stage. The Cilician barons sent a message of contrition and submission to Lewon after they murdered their most recent king.[345] Lewon, for his part, is recorded by Jean Dardel as wanting no part of the kingship of Armenia. According to Dardel, Lewon mistrusted the barons, some of whom were complicit in his uncle's murder, and also saw Cilicia as an impoverished nation.[346] Lewon finally accepted the position for the sake of the kingdom's Christians and to avoid provoking the ire of the Pope.[347] After initially impressing the Cilician barons with his

[339] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 54-75.
[340] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 48-49.
[341] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 56-57.
[342] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 55-56.
[343] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 85.
[344] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 86-87.
[345] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 70-72.
[346] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 72-74.
[347] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 74.

assertive posture, Lewon alienates them yet again with his insistence on a Latin coronation.[348] Although he justifies his position by emphasizing his own Western-ness and the importance of placating the Pope, he loses the loyalty of the aristocracy and the Catholicosate who begin to secretly coordinate with the Mamluks to bring Lewon down.[349]

The Mamluks' siege of the Cilician capital Sis, while relatively short, is replete with instances of heroism on the part of the Lusignan loyalists, and especially of the king. The king himself is wounded while repelling attackers on the wall, and is ultimately betrayed by the Catholicos and the regents who had defected to the Mamluks' side. Seeing himself abandoned by his subjects and his cause as hopeless, Lewon finally surrenders himself to the Mamluk commander Emir Malik.[350] Dardel's description of Lewon's captivity, while full of danger, also shows a surprising tenderness and respect on the part of the Mamluks. Lewon is repeatedly exhorted by the Mamluk commander, as well as the sultan himself, to convert to Islam or to die a cruel death.[351] However, he is also given a stipend by the sultan and established in his household for the duration of his captivity.[352]

Lewon finally finds the mechanism for his release with his introduction to Dardel. The king's confessor becomes his envoy and visits various European kingdoms in order to secure his ransom. Dardel's mission is successful at the court of Juan I of Castile, whose intercession also prompts the previously aloof king of Aragon to send representatives to the Mamluk court. Upon being released, Lewon is given every courtesy and is even granted lands and titles in Castile.[353] Dardel's narrative does not end there, however. Lewon spends the rest of his life actively

[348] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 114.
[349] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 117-140.
[350] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 138-140.
[351] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 158-159.
[352] Ḥovhannēs Dardel *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 153.
[353] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 193-194.

engaging with the various kings of Europe, striving in vain to build a coalition to retake his kingdom.[354]

4.3 Dardel's Historiography and the Irreconcilability of Latin-Armenian Kingship

Dardel's chronicle, and especially his description of Lewon V's life, is crucial to our discussion of Cilician afterlives, as it introduces several of the directions that the future discourse on Armenian kingship would take. But in setting out in any one direction, we should remain cognizant of how Dardel's ecclesiastical background informs our understandings of Armenian kingship in the fourteenth century. To that end, it would be wise to consider the question: where does the Armenian Apostolic Church fit in Dardel's understanding of Armenian kingship? Judging from the broad themes that we will encounter in the following discussions, it is clear that Dardel's understanding firmly subordinates both the Armenian Church and the Armenian king to Papal authority. The first, and perhaps most significant, direction is the chronicle's preoccupation with a formidable Armenian-Frankish divide that seals the kingdom's fate. Second is the shift in the priorities of the Armenian king from protecting oppressed Armenians to establishing a papal-inspired pan-Christian coalition among the European monarchs. The third direction that the chronicle reveals is the preoccupation with the prestige and incomes that one could expect as the king of Armenia.

The Armenian-Frankish divide is a curious moment of boundary-making in Cilician historiography that appears particularly hostile when compared to previous generations. The thirteenth-century chronicle attributed to Smbat may have been inimical to the principality of

[354] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 192-197.

Antioch during the succession crisis instigated by the death of Lewon I.[355] However, this enmity was directed at Philip of Antioch in particular, as he supplanted the existing power structures in Cilicia and mocked the traditions of Armenian kingship at the time.[356] On the other hand, Dardel's chronicle appears to divide the kingdom's subjects into two groups, in which the Frankish Catholic faction is loyal to the king of Armenia, and the Armenian Apostolic faction as unscrupulous and disinterested in the cause of defending Christianity. When the Armenians rise up against Kostandin II, for example, they also murder the king's brother Bohemond the Lord of Koṛikos, the Western warriors who had come to defend Armenia, as well as a group of Catholic priests who were celebrating mass.[357] This event, which is told in two separate chapters, set the narrative stage for the downfall of Cilicia. The enmity and frenzy of the Armenian nobility imply that the downfall of their kingdom was, to a certain extent, an inevitability. By framing the attack on the Catholics as taking place while they were at their prayer, Dardel's narrative sets the stage for the futile, yet heroic, efforts of his patron to save the kingdom.

The frequency and spectacle of the Armenians' treachery only grows in scope at the fall of the kingdom. When Dardel writes of Lewon's journey to Cilicia, for example, he identifies the castellan of the Koṛikos as an Armenian by birth, one Sir Kostandin Braganats'i, who had planned to coordinate with Lewon in order to take the Mamluk-occupied fortress of Tarsus with an infusion of men and troops.[358] Upon seeing the surprising ease with which Lewon advanced, however, Sir Kostandin grew envious and fearful and began sending letters to the Mamluk commander of Tarsus' garrison warning him of Lewon's movements and tactics.[359] When

[355] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 225.
[356] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 225..
[357] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 48-49.
[358] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 91.
[359] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 92.

narrating the events concerning the Mamluk siege, Dardel writes that some deceitful Armenians who did not desire for the kingdom to be in the hands of Christians sabotaged the diplomatic overtures between the two powers.[360]

The former regent Vasil is another Armenian scoundrel to whom Dardel devoted a considerable amount of attention. In addition to being found guilty of embezzling funds from the royal treasury, he also joins a plot to kill Lewon and deliver his kingdom into the hands of Emir Melek and end the siege.[361] Finally, as a means to ingratiate himself to his new overlords, Vasil also converts to Islam but receives no favor due to his transparent obsequiousness.[362] Moreover, during Lewon's captivity, when Dardel was traveling Europe in search of sympathetic monarchs to pay the king's ransom, he writes of another duplicitous Armenian. He writes that an Armenian apostate named Manuel had been traveling around the same kingdoms as Dardel and misappropriating funds from open-handed kings that were meant for Lewon's release.[363]

Dardel's critical outlook on the Armenians, in terms of their lack of loyalty to Christianity, goes so far as to indict the Catholicos himself. In his chronicle, the Catholicos, whom Dardel explains is revered as the Pope is in the West, is complicit in the coordination that the treacherous Armenians have with the Mamluks.[364] Moreover, the Catholicos, along with the dowager-queen Mariun and Vasil, is behind the plot to have Lewon killed and the kingdom delivered into the hands of the Mamluk sultan.[365] He even goes so far as to recruit one of the king's closest companions, Matthew de Lappe, to his conspiracy, promising him the lordship of Cilicia.[366] Finally, when the sultan goes about deciding the fates of the Cilician captives, the

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[360] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 115-116.
[361] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 107-108 (embezzlement), 130-132 (for the plot to kill the king).
[362] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 154.
[363] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 177-179.
[364] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 123.
[365] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 130-132.
[366] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 130-132.

Catholicos asks sultan to return to Cilicia and continue to enjoy his patrimony under the sultan's yoke.[367] The moral bankruptcy of the Catholicos from Dardel's perspective is yet another reason for the inevitability of the kingdom's downfall. As a staunch Catholic and advocate of the aristocratic power structure, it is reasonable to believe that Dardel believed in the need for a member of the clergy to mediate the power of the Armenian king. But by representing the Catholicos, the ostensible mediator, as being this corrupt, Dardel portrays the valiant efforts of his benefactor as being ultimately in vain.

For starters, we should mention that the Armenian Church had unified, at least in name, with the Catholic Church several times. The most significant instance of this was at the 1307 Council of Sis, which officially decided in favor of union with the Rome.[368] Moreover, this dissertation has already discussed the case of Lewon I's coronation, which was preconditioned on the king's submission to the Pope. Setting aside this long, yet irregular practice of the Cilicians, Dardel's own views on the matter are more consistent.

Dardel begins his chronicle's narrative with the conversion story of King Abgar (r.1st century B.C. - 50 A.D.) who, after beginning a correspondence with Christ before his crucifixion, receives the apostle Bartholomew to oversee his conversion to Christianity.[369] In addition to eschewing the pre-Christian past of Armenian kingship, Dardel's chronicle establishes the theme of external supervision to maintain proper Christian practice and belief. Later in his chronicle, following the comparatively perfunctory narrative for the conversion of

[367] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 154; See Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The Captivity and Release of the Armenian King Leo V in Cairo: Diplomatic Gifts and Ransom in Mamluk Diplomacy," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 26 (2023): 55–69, 66. She writes that, considering the degree of autonomy with which Cilicia was governed following its conquest, there is cause to consider the Catholicos' condition in Sis would have been significantly less strained in terms of ecclesiastical freedom than might be otherwise assumed. Meanwhile, a major factor in the Pope's influence was submission. It seems as though the sultan would have been satisfied with a remittance of taxes, without imposing conversion.
[368] La Porta, "Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century," 272-273.
[369] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 4.

King Trdat III (r. 298 - c. 330 A.D.) Dardel jumps to a meeting between the rulers of Armenia—King Trdat III and his Catholicos Gregory the Illuminator—and the Roman emperor and the Pope in Constantinople. In the course of this meeting the Armenians and Romans establish a union between their respective doctrines and the former place themselves in submission to the latter.[370] This meeting establishes the hierarchy between the two confessions, with the Catholic Church emerging as the superior party.

Later in Dardel's narrative, during the establishment of the kingdom of Cilicia, Dardel makes a point of emphasizing the cordial relationship between Lewon I and the prince of Antioch, writing that the two had promised to come to each other's aid when called upon.[371] The fact that this prince of Antioch is not named, and that Lewon had risen to prominence largely by reducing Antioch to a vassal status, is overlooked. Moreover, the chronicle has Lewon asking the prince to provide him the law code with which the prince governs his principality, as Lewon desired to govern his kingdom in a similar fashion.[372] Later as Lewon was preparing for his coronation, Dardel writes that he was to be crowned according to the Roman fashion because of his love for the prince of Antioch and because of his sincere submission to the Holy Church of Rome.[373] Acknowledging the existence of different practices between the churches at this point in the narrative is significant, as it foreshadows a deviation between the two that would eventually lead to Cilicia's downfall. While Dardel praises Lewon I's choice to be crowned according to the Latin rite, the failure of subsequent Armenians kings to definitively resolve the issue of the Armenian Church's errant streak would return to haunt the kingdom. By the time of Lewon V's coronation, the king compromises with the unyielding Armenian barons and clerics

[370] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 4.
[371] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 13.
[372] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 13.
[373] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 14.

and holds a dual coronation in a parallel that invites an unhappy comparison between the two Lewon's reigns.[374]

While the Armenian church had been buttressing and sanctifying Armenian kingship since its very inception, at least insofar as the chronicle is concerned, that sanctification should always have come through the mediation and the sanction of the Pope. So when Dardel writes that the Catholicos was revered by the Armenians as the Holy Father was in the West, his statement conveys a deep frustration for a Church that had veered into heresy.[375] Then, by following the trajectory of the Catholicosate throughout the narrative of the chronicle, we see the impact of that unchecked heresy as the Catholicos is transformed from a dutiful subordinate to the Pope to a venal subject of the Mamluk sultan, while the kingdom of Armenia burns down behind him.

Considering the deep and sustained ties that the Outremer Franks and Cilician Armenians had created with one another over the centuries—be they diplomatic, ecclesiastical, or kinship—Dardel's prejudices might initially appear to be misinformed.[376] However, we can appropriately contextualize these prejudices by using his criticism for the Armenian Catholicosate as our guide. As the Apostolic Church in Cilicia was largely supported and followed by the kingdom's Armenians, we can view his resentment for the Armenians as an extension of his ecclesiastical anxieties. Moreover, the sharp boundaries that emerge between these two ethnic groups also find context in the revelation that Dardel was originally not from the Levant and would not have been socialized among the particular nuances of a crusader kingdom. Because the first and only Armenian king that Dardel met was Lewon V, many of the ideas in his chronicle associated with

[374] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 112-114.
[375] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 123.
[376] For more on the integration of Franks and Armenians in Cilicia see Gohar Grigoryan, "Mariun: An Exiled Queen's Pilgrimage and Death in Jerusalem," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā: Journal of Middle East Medievalists* 29 (2021): 217–55.

Armenian kingship would have come from Lewon, in addition to his own learning as a Franciscan friar. So it should not be surprising that the chronicle reflects such an unflattering impression of the Armenians, when we consider the uprisings and defections that they had committed in the face of the Lusignans', and especially Lewon's, dramatic changes to Armenian kingship in Cilicia.

Dardel, himself, provides the most illuminating interpretation to consult when approaching these developments. In his admiring account of the two Lusignan kings of Cilicia, he provides ample insight into which traits were desirable in an Armenian king. First, and quite significantly, when Dardel writes of the reign of the first Lusignan king, he does not refer to him by his Armenian regnal name of Kostandin II. He instead chooses to maintain his original Frankish name of Guy.[377] Although the first Lusignan monarch called himself the King of Armenia and minted coins to that effect, the chronicler's continued use of his pre-regnal name implies a lack of respect for the transcendental experience of Armenian kingship. Instead, it suggests a condescension on the part of the Latin to take up the crown of Armenia. While the crown could, and would, provide a significant boost in prestige to Guy, as well as the future titular kings of Armenia, the disregard shown for Armenian kingship as a unique experience flattens the title, subsuming it into a broader tradition of kingship that already existed in the Latin world.

In his narrative of King Guy's life, Dardel writes that he had initially refused the crown that had been offered to him, preferring instead to remain in the relative comfort of Constantinople. However, a message from his brother John Lusignan, who temporarily governed the kingdom as regent, dissuaded him from this path. Dardel writes that Guy was moved by John's exhortation that he should come and claim the crown for the sake of Christianity. Later,

[377] *Colophons of 14th Century Armenian Manuscripts*, ed. Lewon Khachikyan, (Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Ak'ademia, 1950, 1950), 343.

when Guy does arrive, he is credited with reclaiming much of the land that had been conquered by the Turks and the Saracens. It is important to stress that Guy Lusignan is a king who is lauded by Dardel as being simultaneously peaceable and a warrior. Dardel's explanation of Guy's reasoning for coming to take the crown already shows a marked departure from the Cilician rulers of the past. First, it should be noted that the king preferred the luxuries of Constantinople over the challenges associated with being the king of a frontier kingdom. His acquiescence came from a sense of obligation to the Pope and to Christianity, as a whole. Moreover, upon his arrival, Guy's priorities were the recapture of lost territories and making war.

Compare the above characterization with that of an earlier ruler of Cilicia. The following excerpt is from Vahram's *History of the House of Ṛubeneans* about the beginning of the reign of the mid-twelfth century prince T'oros II, who had seized power after escaping captivity under the Byzantine emperor. Following the death of the emperor during a hunting excursion, T'oros is said to have slipped away into the woods and returned to Cilicia as a fugitive. Vahram writes:

> And he [the Byzantine emperor] died right there,
> Being sentenced accordingly for his crimes.
> The army immediately turned back,
> And took [his] body with them.
> His guts were buried there, and an edifice was built atop them,
> Which until this day,
> Is known by the name of Little Tripe,
> But the Greek army turned back,
> Yet T'oros remained there,
> About which much has been written,
> And about which there is much variation.
> By some it is said,
> That T'oros came alone,
> And arrived in Antioch by ship,
> Entering Cilicia from there.
> He met Stefano there,
> And they excogitated together,
> To first take Amide,
> And then to rule over other lands.
> Others say the emperor came with him ,

And that T‘oros had remained
While he was in the land of the Greeks,
A princess had fallen in love with him.
And she gave him many riches,
Which T‘oros brought back with him ,
He climbed the mountains,
And he met a priest,
To whom he revealed himself secretly,
To be the son of Lewon,
He excitedly embraced him,
And put T‘oros to work as a shepherd
And as for the Armenians who remained,
And lived on that mountain there,
Were oppressed by the Greek nation,
And desired their previous lords.
The Priest told of them [to T‘oros]
And what they desired,
Who came together hastily,
And raised up T‘oros.[378]

Both versions of T‘oros’ establishment as prince show a marked difference in terms of his appeal as a ruler. In the first version, T‘oros fleeing captivity as a member of the imperial guard carries a certain degree of cunning, as does his serpentine reentry into a Byzantine-occupied Cilicia. In the second story, his seduction of the Byzantine princess reveals his diplomatic aptitude, while his adventures in the mountains highlight both his humility and popular acclaim. It is clear from either tale that T‘oros cared little for a life of influence in the Byzantine court,

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[378]Եւ ի տեղւոջ`ըն վախճանեալ, Ըստ արժանւոյն` վճիռ առեալ. Իսկոյն զօրաց`ըն յետս դարձեալ, Եւ մարմինն` զհետ պարձեալ: Զփորոստին` անդէն թաղեալ, Եւ ի վերայ` շինուած կազմեալ. Որ մինչև ցայս` օր անուանեալ, Եւ Քաղրդիկ` տեղին կոչեալ: Բայց յունական` զօրուն դարձեալ, Եւ Թորոսի անդէն` կացեալ. Զոր է յոլովք` են պատմագրեալ, Որոց և բանք`ըն բաժանեալ: Քանզի ոմանց` է ասացեալ, Առանձնակի` զԹորոսն եկեալ. Եւ յԱնտիոք`նաւու ելեալ, Ի Կիլիկիա` անտի մտեալ: ՁՍտեֆանէ` անդէն գտեալ, Եւ միաբան` հնարաւորեալ. Նախ զԱմուտայն` եղեն առեալ, Ապա նովաւ` այլոց տիրեալ: Իսկ որ կայսր` զհետ եկեալ, Ասէն զԹորոսն` և մնացեալ. Մինչ ի Յունացց` աշխարհին լեալ, Դշխոյ կնոջ` մի զնա սիրեալ: Եւ գաձ բազում` նմա տուեալ, Զոր և Թորոս` զհետ բերեալ. Ի լեռնական` կողմանսն ելեալ, Եւ քահանայ` զոմըն գտեալ: Ում թագնաբար` զինքն յայտնեալ, Թէ Լէոնի` որդի եղեալ. Նա ցնծութեամբ` յանձին առեալ, զԹորոս ի գործ` հովուի եդեալ: Իսք ի Հայոց` որք մնացեալ, Եւ ի լերին` անդ բնակեալ. Ի յունական` ազգէն նեղեալ, Նախնի տէրանց`ըն ըղձացեալ: Քահանային` նոցա պատժեալ, Եւ զցանկալին` ինքեանց յայտնեալ.Որք և փութով` միաբանեալ, Եւ զԹորոսն` ի վեր առեալ:Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut‘iwn Ṛubeneants‘,* 201-203.

and instead sought to liberate his territories from occupation. His adventure in the mountains also suggests a connection and familiarity with the terrain of mountainous Cilicia that implies a personal stake in the fate of the principality. Finally, and most important for this discussion, T‘oros becomes the ruler of Cilicia because of support from the mountain-dwelling Armenians living under a tyrannical ruler.

Omitting Guy’s warlike tendencies, none of these qualities can be found in Dardel’s characterization of the Lusignan king. Guy preferred the splendor of Constantinople to the dangers of Cilicia. When he finally did bestir himself to take the throne, it was for the sake of protecting Christianity’s southeastern flank, rather than to liberate his home. Nowhere in Dardel’s description of Guy’s life do we see any concern or solidarity with the Armenian people.[379] While T‘oros is successful in repelling an occupying force of Byzantines from the Cilician territories, Guy is apparently assassinated by the aristocracy as a result of their war weariness from his constant expansionist campaigns. During T‘oros’ reign, the Ṛubenean dynasty was not the consolidated regional hegemon that it would grow to be in successive generations. However, the bellicose prince was able to garner enough support to accomplish his mission, while Guy seems to have overreached. This contrast shows a disconnect between the priorities of the Cilician aristocracy and those of Guy, which in turn, highlights the broad range of ideals and practices that medieval king in the Mediterranean could pursue. Dardel’s laudatory portrayal of Guy suggests a different understanding of what makes an ideal king. As stated earlier, the chronicler makes no qualms about his disdain for the Armenians of Cilicia, as they are characterized as being, by and large, treacherous. So it may not have been an especially

[379] When I say Armenian people, I mean the people who were considered Armenian at the time. These are the same “Armenians” who raised T‘oros up as a ruler, and felt oppressed under Greek tyranny. For that matter, when I say Greek, I mean what the text at the time construed as Greek. In neither case do I make any reference to the modern day Greeks or Armenians.

glaring moral failing that Guy did not want to leave the comforts of Constantinople to rule over a population of heretics and ingrates.

Dardel is also consistent in the descriptions of his patron, Lewon V. Much like his uncle, Lewon is not portrayed as a monarch who eagerly took up the crown of Cilicia. In fact, Dardel writes that the Armenian delegations to Cyprus needed to make multiple entreaties before Lewon reluctantly agreed to the request. As mentioned above, Lewon's suspicions regarding the goodwill of the Cilician barons and the absence of prestige that came with ruling an apparently insolvent kingdom, was eventually overcome by his even greater fear of the Pope's reproach for abandoning a Christian kingdom. Dardel writes that Lewon delayed his sojourn to Cilicia until he could gather a strong Papal army to avoid the fate of his uncles.[380] Dardel also writes that without a strong army that would be loyal to Lewon, he would not be able to accomplish much as king for the benefit of Christendom.[381] This sets the stage for Lewon's tenure as king. While his childhood would have caused him to a have a healthy skepticism of the Cilicians, the idea of coming to his throne with an occupying army at his back suggests: first, that his policies would have been unpopular enough to necessitate extra security, and second, that Lewon would be recreating the same conditions that brought about the death of his uncle.

4.4 Catholic and Gaulic Kingship in Armenian Cilicia

When King Guy was assassinated, he was joined in death with many Western warriors and priests. Dardel writes that Guy had initially come to claim his throne with many reinforcements for the recovery of the land.[382] Later, the Pope sent a letter to Guy, whom Dardel identifies as a

[380] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 67.
[381] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 67-68.
[382] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 33.

just Catholic in submission to the Church of Rome and a Westerner.[383] In the letter, the Pope announced that the Armenians of Cilicia were not sufficiently pious, and that he would send more priests to show them the error of their ways. He then added that if the Armenians submitted, then he would fill the land with Western princes from Gaul as well as forces from the other side of the mountain who were fighting the enemies of the faith. Although the Catholicos and the rest of the clergy were reported by Dardel to have submitted happily, the fact that Guy was assassinated shortly thereafter, suggests a very different reception to this news. The Pope's promise to send more Western reinforcements, while a threatening proposition for the existing power holders of Cilicia, is nevertheless presented as a reward by Dardel. Moreover, Dardel's specification that the reinforcements were Western, and that their king was also a Westerner is likewise telling, in terms of how the kingship was to be reorganized.

It would seem that this sequence of events was repeated in a very similar fashion in the arrival of Lewon V to Cilicia. He was not only joined with an admittedly small Western army at his back, but he also made similar claims to his Westernness as a defining character of his rule.[384] In the chronicle, Lewon first attempts to sway the Armenian barons to accept his wish to be crowned according to the Latin rite as a political necessity. He says that he would need to adhere to the Latin rite in order to win over the Pope and the other Western princes, because the kingdom was sore beset with enemies.[385] This practical reason should have been sufficient to explain the need to placate the Western lords. However, Lewon, unprompted, then volunteers more information behind his reasoning that sheds more light on the impact of the Church of

[383] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 40-41.
[384] See Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 101 for a descripotion on the small size of the king's army; See also Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 113-114 for a description of the king's Gaulic heritage. In Dardel's account the small size of the host was a result of the lack of funds that Lewon had at the time of his entry into Cilicia.
[385] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 112.

Rome on this new form of Armenian kingship. Dardel has Lewon saying that "It should also be known to you, lords, that we are in submission to the Church of Rome and have a Catholic faith, which you are also obliged to hold. And because we are the descendants of Gaul, it is proper for us to follow the laws of the Church and we wish to be crowned as king according to the laws of the other Christian kings."[386]

As discussed above, the removal of Armenian ecclesiastical legitimacy from Armenian kingship, in addition to the rhetoric relating to the liberation of Armenians under tyranny, indicates a shift in the ideas for royal authority that would be replicated in subsequent generations of Armenian kings in the Latin world. By announcing Lewon's dedication to the Catholic Church and connecting this affiliation to the tradition of Christian kingship, Dardel retroactively cut off the Armenian kingship of previous generations from his understanding of the Christian tradition. The inclusion of Lewon's Gaulic heritage in his reasoning, moreover, highlights a new fracture in Armenian kingship in the West. Rather than merely replacing the source of the monarch's spiritual legitimacy, Dardel's chronicle also sees Lewon tap into a tradition of kingship that had been developing across Europe for the past two hundred years.

In addition to Lewon's desire to adhere to a Catholic doctrine from a place of earnest belief, Lewon's declaration also attempts to connect with the Mediterranean's various other monarchs in the name of their shared faith. Scholars of Armenian Cilicia have often remarked on the seemingly transactional nature of support that could be expected from the Pope and Catholic rulers of the Mediterranean. Whether implied, or explicitly stated, capitulation to the doctrine of the Church of Rome was often presented as the price for much Western support for Cilicia, be it

[386] Ոչ զանխուլ իսկ է ի ձէնջ, տեա՛րք, զի մեք հնազանդք եմք եկեղեցւոյն Հռոմայ և ունիմք զկաթողիկէ հաւատս, զոր պարտ է և ձեզ ունել. Եւ զի սերունդ մեր է ի Գաղղիոյ, վասն այսորիկ պարտ և պատշաճ իսկ է մեզ հնազանդել կանոնաց եկեղեցւոյ և կամիմք զի պսակեսցուք ի թագաւոր ըստ օրինակի այլոց թագաւորացն քրիստոնէից: Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 113.

financial or military. Moreover, the adoption of a Gaulic style of kingship, vague as it may be, is nevertheless juxtaposed with the expectations for Western aid. In pursuing this path for his coronation, Lewon was putting to the test the offers made by the Pope and crusader kingdoms to intervene on Cilicia's behalf.

The results varied for Lewon and his kingdom. On the one hand, the shift in models of rulership did not save Cilicia from conquest. On the contrary, Dardel's chronicle suggests that it caused it.[387] In addition to this, many of Lewon's appeals for pan-Christian solidarity in the face of the Mamluks' aggression proved to be ineffective. For example, when Lewon appeals to the Genoese to be set free without a ransom, after he is taken captive in the aftermath of the Cypriot invasion, Dardel writes, "As for the silver you demand, I am not bound to give it. Even if I had it, you have no right to claim it. Rather, you should support me, so that I may deliver my country from the infidels who now oppress it."[388] The Genoese only release Lewon when he has used all of his and his wife's riches to pay for a ransom, and even then do not intervene in his war against the Mamluks because of a non-aggression pact signed between the two powers.[389] Later, following his release from captivity in Cairo, Lewon's hopes for finding unity and support to form a crusading coalition are once again dashed when, in Italy, he stumbles upon a political morass of bribes, diplomatic intrigue, and Papal infighting.[390]

In spite of these setback, however, the adoption of Latin styles of rule opened a host of diplomatic opportunities for the fallen king. Following a model of kingship that was familiar and accessible to the Latin Mediterranean carried a greater probability of support and solidarity. While it can be argued that Lewon's insistence on Papal submission was a deciding factor in his

[387] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 115-116
[388] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 83.
[389] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 90.
[390] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 187-189.

kingdom's downfall, it was through the intercession of the King of Castile, who was moved to liberate a fellow Christian king, that Lewon was released from his captivity in Cairo. Moreover, as Lewon traveled through the Western Christian kingdoms, he was consistently met with hospitality and cordiality. When a guest of King Juan I of Castile, for example, Lewon was taken to his wedding with the ten-year-old Princess Beatrix of Portugal, and given the honor of being the king's best man.[391] Later in 1384, as he passed through the kingdom of Navarre, the Navarrese king gifted Lewon with previous jewels and other gifts, including one hundred men-at-arms and one hundred archers with their pay for the retaking of Cilicia.[392]

Perhaps the most powerful instance of Catholic solidarity in Dardel's chronicle, however, can be seen in the chapter of Dardel's consecration as the bishop of Triobolary. In this chapter, Dardel begins with his consecration, which was granted to him for his service to the Armenian king by the Pope in Avignon.[393] He then discusses the stirring speech King Lewon gives to an assembly at the Castilian king's court, composed of the king of Castile, the cardinal of Luna, the prince of Navarre, as well as a collection of bishops, nobles, barons, and knights from Gaul, Aragon, and Portugal.[394] Lewon details his decision to leave his comfortable life in Cyprus in order to fight for the cause of Christianity in Armenia.[395] He laments that, although he did so at the command of Pope Urban, the aid that the Pope promised him never materialized.[396] Finally, after recounting how he was betrayed and carried away into captivity in Babylon, Lewon falls on his knees before King Juan and thanks him for saving him.[397] Dardel writes that in the ensuing

[391] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 189-191.
[392] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 195.
[393] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 192; For the Pope's reasons as to why Dardel was consecrate, see Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 189.
[394] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 192.
[395] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 192.
[396] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 192.
[397] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 192-193.

uproar caused by this display of humility, Lewon begs King Juan for aid in the retaking of his kingdom, to which the affected Juan responds by granting Lewon the lordship and revenues of three notable cities for the duration of his life, in addition to six galley and six ships for the retaking of his homeland and fifteen thousand florins for travel expenses.[398]

Following his remarkably productive time as a guest of the king of Castile, Lewon journeyed to France, where he would spend the rest of his life. Dardel writes that when Lewon finally reached Paris, the grandness of his reception by King Charles VI of France was only matched by an earlier visit from the Holy Roman Emperor, who was the French king's uncle.[399] The chronicle ends on an unusually uplifting note, as Lewon is feasted by the king of France, along with the Dukes of Burgundy and Berry, all of whom show their greatness and magnificence by means of extravagant gifts.[400] Moreover, Dardel displays every expectation that King Charles would intercede for him, and help him reclaim his lost kingdom, saying that he had done so for several rulers in the past.[401] Unfortunately for Lewon, however, that benevolence would not materialize into concrete results, as King Charles would become engrossed in the Hundred Years War with France. In the midst of this disappointment, however, Lewon would continue to use the resources that were at his disposal in order to secure the necessary support for an invasion of the Mamluk Sultanate. In 1386, Lewon traveled as an envoy of King Charles to visit the English court as an ambassador of the French.[402] There, he would unsuccessfully attempt to negotiate a cessation of hostilities between the two sides with the appeal that the Christians of the Orient were left to suffer under the yoke of Saracens.[403]

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[398] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 193-194.
[399] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 196.
[400] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 197.
[401] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 196-197.
[402]Monk of Saint Denys, *Chronicle of the Monk of Saint Denys: Containing the Reign of Charles VI, from 1380 to 1422*, trans. M. L. Bellaguet (Paris: Crapelet, 1832–52), 4:423–27.
[403]Monk of Saint Denys, *Chronicle of the Monk of Saint Denys,* 4:423–27.

These moments of pity, compassion, camaraderie, and admiration, both for King Lewon and his chronicler, provide a glimpse into this new conception of Armenian kingship. By joining the aforementioned tradition of Christian kingship that resulted from his Latin coronation and fidelity to the Pope, Lewon became fully integrated into a diplomatic, political, and economic network that was based upon a shared understanding of the nature and origins of legitimate royal authority. The shared priority of fighting against nonbelievers to defend and expand the boundaries of an exclusively Catholic Christendom allows for Dardel to portray the King of Armenia as one of a number of monarchs in the greater Mediterranean who cooperate in the pursuit of a broader spiritual goal. Writers defining Armenian kingship in the days of Het‘um I and Lewon II distinguished it by it insolubility within a Seljuk, Byzantine, or Crusader imperial order. However, the Catholic and Gaulic aspects of Armenian kingship that Dardel promulgates reshaped it into one defined by its legibility**.**

Dardel’s mention of Lewon’s Gaulic heritage as another aspect of his Armenian kingship bears further discussion, as it continues the process of reshaping Armenian kingship according to Western norms. Whereas prior Cilician kings, such as Lewon I and Het‘um II had gone to great lengths to show their obedience to the Pope, the primary sources continue to depict their reigns according to their authority over the Armenians, not Armenia. Lewon V’s Gaulic credentials and inclination toward the Franks had been a major point of conflict between himself and the kingdom that he ruled, as it was for his uncle before him. Chroniclers defining Armenian kingship in previous generations consistently provided a genealogy for the king that traced his descent from the line of Japheth’s grandson, T‘orgom.[404] However, in subverting this

[404] The understanding of Armenian genealogical heritage as a product of T‘orgom come from Movsēs Khorenats‘i’s *Hayots‘Patmut‘iwn*, a text written about the lives and reigns of the Armenian kings from the days of the Biblical flood until the fifth century A.D. See Vahram, see the *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat.

genealogical underpinning for Armenian kingship, Lewon effectively repudiated the connection between royal legitimacy and the Armenian people as well.[405] As discussed above, much of the narratives surrounding the founding of the kingdom in Armenian Cilicia revolved around reversing the condition of Armenians that lived in a state of vulnerability. Whether their foes be Turkish, Greek, or Frankish, the conquest of their territories had been framed as a heroic moment for the chronicles' readers, as they signaled the deliverance of the people from a state of subjugation.[406] However, in clarifying his Gaulic heritage as the primary motivator for his choice in political and religious affiliation, Lewon abandons the tradition of the T'orgomid kings. Instead, Dardel promotes a model of authority that had developed in Europe, a model that was largely defined by its territorial jurisdiction.

We see definitive mentions of Armenian kingship being related to a territory rather than to a people in Dardel's chronicle.[407] However, when considering the process, by which Latin writers came to their conclusion on Armenian kingship, the chronicle of Hayton of Koṛikos is particularly illuminating. In his geographical description of the kingdoms of world in *Flowers of the Histories of the East*, Hayton distinguishes between Cilicia and Greater Armenia. He writes that although Cilicia is a province in Syria, its ruler is known as the king of Armenia because it

[405] By Armenian people, I mean the people whom the chroniclers identify as Armenian. Premodern ethnicity is a field that is continuously evolving as scholars uncover more layers of nuance and fluidity in their medieval subjects. For more on the topic of premodern ethnicity, see Eastmond, *Tamta's World*; see also Natasha Hodgson, "Conflict and Cohabitation: Marriage and Diplomacy between Latins and Cilician Armenians, c.1097–1253," in *The Crusades and the Near East: Cultural Histories*, ed. Conor Kostick (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 83–100. They provide particularly insightful analyses, especially with regard to the development of the field. For the purposes of the present discussion however, the Armenian people are not designated according to their religion, or social class. Pre-modern historiography frequently identifies Armenian subjects that follow the "Georgian" or "Roman" faiths. Moreover, when referring to the aristocracy, Armenian chroniclers will often clarify that they are speaking of Armenian "barons" or "bishops." However, given the opaque nature of the ethnicities of the laity living in lands that premodern rulers governed, it would be inappropriate to claim that they are the general "Armenians" to whom chroniclers, such as Movsēs Khorenats'i, Kirakos Gandzakets'i, Vahram Rabuni, and others are referring to. Therefore, this dissertation will unfortunately leave this fascinating yet elusive question unanswered, and merely reference the "Armenians" in terms of their centrality to the kingship being discussed.

[406] See, for example, Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 196, 207.

[407] See, for example, Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 12, 14, 15, 26, 30-33, 67.

was the Armenians who conquered that territory.[408] Following this premise, the Armenian kingship undergoes a change whereby its authority becomes related to the territory conquered by the Cilician Armenians, rather than the Armenians themselves. As a result, Lewon V's declaration of preferring a Catholic and Gaulic style of authority, according to Dardel, goes beyond the threat of challenging or replacing the ruling class of Cilicia. It challenges the very nature of royal authority in the kingdom.

The ramifications of the linguistic ambiguity behind the title *t'agawor hayots'* are greater than might initially be apparent. By designating a space, rather than a people, as the object of the king's authority, Armenian kingship begins to resemble the models outlined in *The King's Two Bodies*. In his seminal treatise, Kantorowicz outlines the process by which medieval European kingdoms, such as France, England and the Papacy, began to build on the concept of the Crown. Beginning in the middle of the twelfth century the idea of an "invisible" Crown had become a political term that referred to the royal demesne.[409] However, at the turn of the thirteenth century, the term began to take on a new dimension in English legal thought, namely the inalienability of the territories belonging to the Crown. This development made these territories an integral part of the king's body politic, and were obliged to be defended. Over time, this understanding of kingship developed to the point that English rulers at their coronation where made to recite oaths guaranteeing the inalienability of the Crown's holdings and to promise to pursue the restoration of any lands that had been alienated by former rulers.[410] This, coupled with the growing

[408] Het'um the Historian, *History of the Tartars*, bk. 1, chap 14.
[409] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 343
[410]Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 347.

association of a kingdom's lands with a *patria*, reinforced this territorially inspired innovation to Armenian kingship.[411]

Given the associations of a Crown's territories with the dignity and prosperity of a kingdom, it should come as little surprise that Lewon V would spend the rest of his life trying to regain his holdings. But with the fall of his kingdom, the next question that must be asked is, in what way was Lewon still the King of Armenia? Kantorowicz provides an answer to this point as well. In his discussion on the metaphysical continuity of a kingdom after the death of the king, the domain of the kingdom is a collection of people that live within the king's territory, as well as the territory itself.[412] He writes moreover, that the kingdom—as a corporate body—once created could not die. As a result of Dardel's innovations to Armenian kingship, once the territory of the kingdom of Armenia was delineated, that being the recognized territories of Cilicia, it could not be alienated from the kingdom, regardless of its conquest.

4.5 Remembering Armenian Kingship in the Absence of a Kingdom

Up until this point, the chapter has outlined changes in Armenian kingship that were metaphysical and legal in nature. The process of transforming Armenian kingship into a form that would be recognizable to Catholic European rulers allowed for subsequent Armenian kings to treat their position as an honorific title. As kingship continued to be mediated without the

[411] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 236. The term *patria*, according to Kantorowicz had its origins in antiquity, and was defined as "…the aggregate of all the political, religious, ethical, and moral values for which a man might care to live and die…" but by the Middle Ages that term had gradually come to refer to a person's village. The term gained a new designation under Roman canon law during the medieval period, by which it grew to encompass the celestial city of Jerusalem, to which everyone was a member. Finally, that association with paradise was adapted to the domains of kings, which modeled their own rules according to the kings of the Bible. see Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 232-237.

[412] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 299.

figure of the king, however, its fractures steadily diverged into myriad configurations. Across the Mediterranean, in the regions formerly part of or adjacent to the kingdom of Cilicia, writers engaged with significantly different interpretations of Armenian kingship. In the works attributed to Ḥovhannēs T‘lkurants‘i, for example, kingship became an object of nostalgia and mourning. As writers whose political positions were removed from the conflicts of succession and land tenure, their works came to embody a more sentimental association with Armenian kingship, and particularly that of Cilicia. The remainder of this chapter will examine the didactic poems dedicated to the Cilician soldier known as Liparit.

The mystery behind the author of the poems being discussed is a matter that deserves further attention, however. The poet known as Ḥovhannēs T‘lkurants‘i is purported to be the author of many lyric poems dealing with a variety of worldly topics, such as the pleasures and perils of intoxication, love, and women. Also, as will be seen below, T‘lkurants‘i was also known for ending his poetry through a first-person retrospective of his own experience with the matter.[413] In addition to his attention to worldly topics, his writing style also bears the striking feature of intensive engagement with Turkish and Persian language vocabulary and poetic conventions. This has given rise to a lively debate surrounding the poet’s origins and experience. Karapet Kostaneants‘, for example, has identified two categories of works that had been attributed to T‘lkurants‘i. The first subgroup is marked by an energetic style and simple diction with ample use of borrowings from Turkish and Persian. The second subgroup, however, progresses more with more florid language and a smooth rhythm.[414] This has led Kostanenats‘ to argue that the first category of poetry was written in the youth of T‘lkurants‘i, whereas the

[413] See Ḥovhannēs T‘lkurants‘i, “Vasn Siroy” [On Love] and “Tagh Vasn Arbets‘ut‘ean”, *Ḥovhannēs T‘lkurants‘in ew iwr Tagherě* ed. Karapet Kostaneants‘ (Tblisi, 1892), 29-30, 40-42.
[414] Kostaneants‘, Introduction to *Ḥovhannēs T‘lkurants‘in ew iwr Tagherě*, 8.

second was written in his mature years.[415] Kostaneants''s explanation would help answer an apparent discrepancy in the historical record, because there also existed a Ḥovhannēs II T'lkurants'i who reigned as the Cilician Armenian Catholicos between 1489-1525.[416] Given the sharp contrast between the works in the first subgroup, and the existence of a Catholicos of the same name. Kostaneants' has argued that before his consecration, T'lkurants'i had been an āshūgh who used his familiarity with Turkish and Persian in order to entertain his patrons.[417] Moreover, the author's preoccupation with the love of women, has caused Kostaneants' to suggests that he had been married at one point in life, and had only become a Catholicos after the death of his wife.[418]

This interpretation of T'lkurants'i's biography has not gone unchallenged. The Catholicos Babk'ēn I has argued that the poet's knowledge of worldly pleasure was not necessarily a reflection of personal experience but a deep understanding of human spirituality born of extensive study and education.[419] This dispute is once again outside the scope of our present discussion, yet it is necessary to simply identify that such a disagreement exists. However, what is relevant for the purposes of this chapter is Kostaneants' suggestion that T'lkurants'i may have spent his youth as a troubadour that performed in front of various congregations. As will be seen below, the poems under review today invite public recitations in their texts, particularly in feast halls. That being the case, T'lkurants'i recitation of the poem may have reached beyond the realm of personal sentiment and into the arena of community building.

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[415] Kostaneants', Introduction to *Ḥovhannēs T'lkurants'in ew iwr Tagherě*, 8-9.
[416] While the kingdom of Cilicia was conquered by the Mamluk Sultanate, the Catholicosate was able to negotiate an arrangement in which it would be allowed to continue its spiritual operations in its seat at Sis. It would keep its position until its abolition by the Ottoman government during the Armenian genocide, after which is moved to Antelias in Lebanon.
[417] Kostaneants', Introduction to *Ḥovhannēs T'lkurants'in ew iwr Tagherě*, 9.
[418] Kostaneants', Introduction to *Ḥovhannēs T'lkurants'in ew iwr Tagherě*, 15-16.
[419] Co-Catholicos Babk'ēn I of the Great House of Cilicia, *Patmut'iwn Kat'oghikosats' Kilikioy (144-ēn Minch'ew Mer Ōrerě)* (Monastic Press of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1939), 80.

Unfortunately, there is also a lack of clarity with the provenance of the poems to be discussed. The poem "Lay for the Brave Liparit," is presented in the critical edition of Ēmanuēl Pivazean's compilation of works attributed to T'lkurants'i. However, the poem purported to be the "Lay for the Brave Liparit," has an abrupt change in its rhythm and rhyme scheme that suggests that it may actually be two different poems that were assembled together in the single manuscript, from which it was curated. Moreover, the ending of the first "half" identifies a Sargis as the narrator of the tale, whereas the second half identifies T'lkurants'i himself. But because the two "halves" of the poem discuss the same subject matter, and because there is no title that would clearly distinguish the two, they may have been mistakenly presented as the same poem. That being said, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to definitely answer this question. Whether or not they are the same poem, they perform a similar function for our purposes—providing an opportunity to discuss another type of engagement with Armenian kingship following the end of the Cilician kingdom. Because of the noticeable shift in style and apparent discrepancy in authorship between the two "halves," this chapter will treat them separately.

The narrative of the poems both cover the heroic struggle of a soldier named Liparit who served in the Cilician royal court during the reign of Kostandin IV, the king preceding Lewon V. Kostandin IV (r. 1362-1374) is remembered in Dardel's chronicle as a usurper—in that he had no legal right to rule—who sat the throne of Armenia and sought to profit, first by selling the kingdom to Peter I of Cyprus, and then to the Mamluk sultan himself, in exchange for riches and safe passage away from Cilicia. Dardel also writes that his barons rose up against him and killed, which in turn prompted them to reach out to Lewon V to claim the throne. The historical character of Libarit has also been addressed by scholars, such as P. M. Khachatryan, Wardan Eghiazaryan, and James Russell. During an attack by Emir Manjak of the Mamluk Sultanate and

the Karaman Beylik on the kingdom of Cilicia, Libarit—who was the son of the T'oros Kapnets'i, Grand Marshall of Cilicia and, more significantly, brother to the traitors Vasil mentioned in Dardel's chronicle above—led the defense of the kingdom.[420] Liparit had coordinated with Kostandin IV to conduct operations on both sides of a bridge that separated the citadel of Sis from the rest of the territory.[421] However, during the battle the king apparently abandoned his position, leading to Liparit's encirclement and martyrdom. The poems broadly follow these narrative points, although they differ in the amount of detail they provide and the poetics they employ. What makes them both so relevant to the discussion of kingship after the fall of Cilicia is the characteristics that they both champion as markers of a proper Armenian heroic king.[422] The figure of Liparit is held up as a paragon, against which his king was found sorely wanting.

The first poem, entitled "Lay for the Brave Liparit," in Pivazyan's critical edition lacks any mention of the king at all. Its value lies in understanding how the author chose to eulogize Liparit, in particular, and Cilicia, in general. The poem begins by detailing Liparit's spirituality, saying that he was pure in spirit and the pride of the Christians.[423] This theme continues throughout this first entry, as his death is particularly mourned by the clergy, be they the Catholicos or the priests. This establishes one of the main markers of ideal Armenian kingship in the romantic perceptions of the poet, and that is a purity of spirit and a harmonious relationship with the Armenian clergy.

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[420] James R. Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkurantc'i and the Mediaeval Armenian Lyric Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1987), 139-140.
[421] Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkurantc'i and the Mediaeval Armenian Lyric Tradition* 140.
[422] For more on the distinction of a heroic king, see Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History", 14.
[423] This is the inverse of the argument made by Lewon V in Dardel's chronicle. The idea that one could also be following a Christian path outside of the Catholic establishment is another example of the ways that Armenian kingship had become negotiated into a greater number of variants.

It is important to consider the ways that Liparit shows his piety when considering the reasons why the clergy would miss him so dearly, as they also shed light as to what the author of the poem was advocating for in leadership. The poem highlights three main areas, in which Liparit performs his piety: deference to the clergy, holy war, and connection. With respect to the first point, the author writes that Liparit was a "leader of the *vardapet*s."[424] Considering the deep rifts driven within the Cilician ecclesiastical circles by the influx of Catholic missionaries, both during this era and the early modern period, having the paragon of the story be steadfast in his support for the Armenian clergy implies the centrality of their approval in the legitimacy of Armenian kingship.

The martial aspects that Liparit displays throughout the poem are deeply religious in nature. Not only does he fight to protect the kingdom, but his warfare makes references Biblical figures, and makes use of imagery associated with martyrdom. For example, in the second quatrain, the author writes:

> In form, you were a brave Sampson,
> When you donned your breastplate,
> The awed Turk would crumble into ash
> Oh great, powerful, brave Liparit.[425]

The description that the Turk would crumble into ash is striking as it elicits imagery of burning that would surely follow the damned following their death. By donning the breastplate, the author all but declares that the Turk will be going to hell. The association between Liparit and Sampson is likewise very effective. It simultaneously conveys his immense strength and invincibility in battle, while also foreshadowing his tragic end as a result of treachery.

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[424] *Vardapet* is translated here as teacher. As the context here is Liparit's obedience, it seemed more appropriate to evoke his past education, rather than use the other, monastic definition for the term.

[425] Անձամբդ քաջ Սամփսոն էիր, Յորժամ ճօշանդ հագնէիր՝ Թուրքն ի յահէդ դառնար մոխիր. Ո՛վ մեծ հըզօր քաջ Լիպարիտ: Hovhannes T'lkurants'i, *Verses* ed. Ēm. Pivazyan (Publishing House of the Armenian SSR, 1960), 197.

The rest of the poem goes on to cast his martial deeds as being for the sake of protecting thousands, although no one steps in to help Liparit when he is in danger. This not only shows the selfless nature of our protagonist, but his ultimate isolation may be an indication of resentment on the part of the author. Throughout the lifetime of the Cilician kingdom, its rulers had frequently joined as allies in the campaigns of their neighbors, such as those of Antioch or Cyprus. Yet, the lack of Western aid during the kingdom's final fall to the Mamluks in 1375 may still be a matter of some bitterness for the author. This may also speak to the martyrdom motif that the poem nurtured. At the moment of his death, the poet writes that his body was painted a crimson color. The color crimson is evocative of the blood of Jesus, whose martyrdom would surely have played a central role in poems about royalty and kingship. However, the poet's use of the color crimson may also have been a reference to Saint Vardan Mamikonean who is memorialized for his martyrdom while fighting the Sassanian empire in 451 A.D. In elegiac poems, such as Nersēs Shnorhali's "Unprecedented Crown Bearer," crimson is frequently used as a color that invokes a transcendent royalty. The idea behind this notion is that the color of one's blood being spilled earns one a royal bearing. So while Liparit is not identified as a king, the use of such colorful imagery, along with his heroic deeds on the battlefield and connection to his people indicate the author's engagement with Armenian kingship in this post-kingdom era.

The connective motif that the author repeats throughout the poem reinforces the notion that the Armenian king should be invested in the welfare of his people. In the poem, Liparit's charity is mentioned in the same quatrain as his deference to the clergy, creating an association between holiness and righteous behavior towards the poor. This connection is carried over to his eventual martyrdom, in which not only does his mother suffer a heart-rending anguish, but that the trees and flowers of the land also sigh in grief. These vignettes taken together help to construct, or

reconstruct, an image of an Armenian king that is not isolated in nature, but integrated among his subjects. While Lewon V attempted to raise an army of Franks to enter his kingdom upon accepting his throne, Liparit's demeanor depicts him as being intimately connected to the people, even to the point that it extends to the topography of the land itself.

When considering the nature of Liparit as an ideal model of Armenian kingship, the final quatrain is particularly enlightening. The author ends his refrain with the following:

> Now the Northern wind,
> Sargis has become your mourner,
> You were the pillar of the Armenians, of us,
> Oh great, powerful, brave Liparit.[426]

As discussed throughout this chapter, a major aspect of Armenian kingship explored in the works of Vahram Rabuni, Kirakos Gandzakets'i, and others of that generation was the framing of Armenians as a population that lived under tyrannical conditions. Liparit, through his charity, charisma, and martial characteristics, satisfies many of the requirements in this new version of Armenian kingship-cum-hero. It is curious, therefore, that in the areas they encompassed, or at the very least bordered, the historical Cilician kingdom would continue to produce texts that sentimentally remembered such performative notions of authority but transferred them onto martyrs like Liparit. In addition to the fact Sargis, who may have been the author the poem, had become his mourner is also striking, considering that he would have lived at least a century after the events that he was narrating. To be his mourner and to feel the Northern wind, suggests that, for Sargis at least, there existed a similar perception of subjugation and melancholy.

The second poem, while lacking the rhythmic repetition of the refrain "Oh, great powerful, brave Liparit," nevertheless conveys a similar image of marshal-martyr. However, this second

[426] Հիւսիսային հողմըն հիմիկ՝ Սարգիս յիշող եղաւ քեզիկ, Դուն սիւն էիր հայոց՝ մեզիկ, Ո՛վ մեծ հզօր քաջ Լիպարիտ: Hovhannes T'lkurants'i, *Verses*, 199.

composition also uses Liparit as a standard for the Armenian king to be measured against. The first poem neglected to mention the Armenian king at all, which is quite telling, in and of itself. However, in this narrative, the king is mentioned and is even introduced as being "holy." It is over the course of the poem that he is proven to be an unworthy counterpart to the marshal.

Like the previous rendition of this event, the present poem maintains the themes of deference, martyrdom, and martial prowess. However, its greater length allows the author to expand on many of these themes, and in the doing, also contributes to the model of kingship introduced above. When discussing his deference, it is framed in terms of humility and piety. For example, this is the exchange between the king and Liparit before his fateful battle against the Emir Manchak:

> Then the holy king said,
> "Brave Liparit, great warrior,
> These horsemen of mine have come for you
> To this place, where they stand [ready].
> You massacred sixty thousand men,
> You took Manchak's illustrious son.
> You brought back the Sultan's banner,
> And you took their horses as plunder."
> He [Liparit] gave sweetness as his response.
> Saying, "It was simply for the evil done to my city.
> But it is not suitable to make idle conversation,
> When the day of my death has arrived."[427]

The king admits here that his horsemen had come forth in order to fight alongside Liparit, rather than for himself. Moreover, he makes a show of listing all of Liparit's achievements, including taking the emir's son as a hostage and stealing the banner of the sultan. Liparit's

[427] Յայնժամ ասէ սուրբ թագաւորն.«Քաջ Լիպարտշ մեծ զօրական, Հեծելս քեզ համար եկան Մինչ յայս տեղիս, ուր կանգնեցան: Վաթսուն հազար մարդ կոտրեցիր, Որ զմանչակին գոված տղան առիր. Զթախտըն սուլթանայ բերիր, Ձիանուն շատ թախտան (արիր)»: Քաղցրիկ ետուր պատասխանի, Թէ «Ես՝ քաղքիս չարին փոխան. Բայց չէ պատեհ զըրուց առնել, Թէպէտ հասաւ ինձ օր մահուան»: Hovhannes T'lkurants'i, *Verses*, 201.

response to the king shows an awareness of his impending death as well as his greater motivation. By choosing not to indulge in the accolades he receives from no less a figure than the king, the poet highlights the lack of any sense of political ambition or desires for personal aggrandizement in this stunning victory.

Later, as he goes to prepare himself before the battle, the very first thing he does after arming himself is to attend to the clergy and to the princes. The poem has him prostrating himself before the holy throne and bowing his knee on every altar. After glorifying the trinity he then moves on to praise the princes who had gathered there as well. In this act, Liparit once again reveals his priorities to the reader. First, it should be noted that he attends to his spirituality before saying farewell to his family. Second, the snubbing of the king in favor of prayer reinforces the point he made earlier about not wanting any material enrichment or political influence by endearing himself to the king. Finally, Liparit's attention to the princes are curious, considering that they would also be aristocrats and political creatures like the king. However, the fact that they were also gathered before the church altar shows that they shared Liparit's spiritual scruples and were, therefore, also in service to the same goals as our protagonist. In honoring them, Liparit takes a moment to signal the sort of community he wishes to build. It is a community that is premised on a shared submission to God and Christ.

The poet's attention to the type of Christianity being followed also bears discussion. Whereas the Christian tradition that Lewon declared his affiliation with resulted in his collaboration with the Latin kings of Europe, the Christianity that the poet of this text is interested in makes frequent references to the saints of the Armenian church. In particular, the Armenian warrior saints Vardan, Sarkis, T'oros, and Mushegh are invoked as parallel cases for

Liparit.[428] This conveys the message that the legitimacy of Liparit here as a stand-in for Armenian kingship is that he is not only a Christian, but an Armenian Christian. In addition to the saints' affiliation with the Armenian Church, their inclusion in the poem is also significant in that they serve as examples for Liparit. Over the course of his struggles, the poet shows how he follows in the footsteps of the saints. In doing so, Liparit begins to function as the saints themselves and inspires those around him to also fight for their faith. The author writes:

> Sixty thousand men at once
> Donned their armor and mounted up,
> They took in their hands the bible spear,
> The Sword, the shield, then formed up.[429]

Coupling this excerpt with the above, in which the king admits that the soldiers had come for Liparit are important because they reinforce the notion that Armenian kingship at this time has become heroic in nature, meaning that the righteous king should lead by example. On this topic of heroic kingship Moin and Strathern write:

> In the heroic guise, the king acquires an unusual, unnatural status because of his accomplishments, on the battlefield above all; his access to the supernatural wellsprings of all good fortune is therefore advertised in an immediate and concrete and invites veneration. Such eruptions of charisma as Weber realized, may be entirely transgressive and may breach typical conceptions of the boundaries between the mortals and the gods, seen especially in the breaking of everyday moral strictures against arbitrary godlike violence. The heroic mode does not preclude the king from mixing with his subjects in a relatively free and open manner.[430]

This thought is something that had been prevalent in historiography covering the era of the Ṛubenean conquests that eventually achieved the kingdom status for Cilicia. This connection between the king and his people has been seen above in the case of T'oros II Ṛubenean mingling with the Armenians as a shepherd, or in the case of Het'um I sitting with Armenians and sharing

[428] Hovhannes T'lkurants'i, *Verses*, 199.
[429] Վաթսուն հազար մարդ միաբան Զրեհին հագան ու ի ձին հեծան, Զեռուին առին զըռում ճօճան, Թուր և ասպար, ու կանգնեցան: Hovhannes T'lkurants'i, *Verses*, 200.
[430] Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History," 14-5.

his journey with various Armenians on his way back from meeting with the Mongols. The violent nature of the kings, and their active participation in wars of conquest and defense are also scenes that have been covered in this dissertation, such as Kostandin of Paperon's battle against Raymond-Ruben or with the wars of Lewon I to reduce the Het'umeans to vassals. However, as Moin later writes, the heroic status is fleeting and is eventually rendered vestigial, with the active and present heroic king being replaced by a distant and passive cosmic king.[431] It is curious then, that the poem would recount historical events at a stage in which the kingdom of Cilicia had been established for a hundred and fifty years, and was ruled by a thoroughly cosmic king in the form of Kostandin IV. Taking the poet's negative portrayal of Kostandin into consideration, combined with the shining image of Liparit, it would seem that the martial virtues of our protagonist, coupled with the blend of spiritually and martyrdom that reinforces it, Armenian kingship, as discussed in both poems calls for a return to heroic kingship.

Finally, the ending of the second poem is an excerpt that demands attention. As the author laments the loss of the great hero and the despoiling of the Kingdom of Cilicia by the Turks, he writes:

> Whenever they sit at table and break bread,
> Multitudes of great princes,
> And holy priests remember him,
> May the lord have mercy, they say.
> The mad Ḥovhannēs Tulkurants'i
> Recited these short and lamentable words.
> Remember him always,
> And recite this parable with one voice.[432]

[431] Moin and Strathern, "Sacred Kingship in World History," 15-16.
[432] Յորտեղ նստին հաց ւ՛ի սեղան, ժողովք բազում և շատ իղխան, Յիշեն զնա սուրբ քահանայք, Տէր ողորմի, ասեն նըմա: Խէվ Յովհաննէս Թուլկուրանցին Կարճ և ողորմ ասաց զայս բան. Դուճք յիշեցէք զինքն հանապազ, Յառակ ասէք ի մի բերան: Hovhannes T'lkurants'i, *Verses*, 203-204.

This coda to the elegy for Liparit is so significant to the author's engagement with Armenian kingship because it attempts to build a community around the nostalgia for an outmoded model of authority. It would seem as though the poet, through his mock recitation and exhortations to remember the fallen hero, is attempting to preserve what he could from the by-then defunct Armenian kingship. It may be a stretch to conclude from the poems that the author was attempting to resurrect Armenian kingship by using Liparit as his guide. However, by fixating on those aspects of kingship from earlier chronicles that focused on active participation in marshal deeds and submission to the Armenian Apostolic cerlgy, it may not be beyond the scope of this discussion to suggest that the author of the poems was attempting to translate those communicable aspects of kingship in the crafting of a new form of heroic political authority.

4.6 Conclusion

With the fall of the kingdom of Cilicia, the era of Armenian sovereignty had come to an end. The last gasps of the kingdom, as Lewon V took power in Sis, were snuffed out within a year's time by an overwhelming offensive from the Mamluk Sultanate and from defections from the Catholicos and his supporters from within. Following the end of this era, however, Armenian kingship continued to transform. These transformations reveal a very different political landscape, one in which there is no Armenian king nor is there a kingdom. While notions of kingship had been for three hundred years negotiated with the powerbrokers of the region and practical geopolitical concerns of the day, the death of the Cilician kingdom gave rise to an afterlife for Armenian kingship now across the Mediterranean, constantly mutating into new forms no longer in need of implementation of their visions before changing once again to yet

another variant. The era of ethereal authority became a new laboratory for Armenian kingship as theorizing the nature of Armenian power came into contact with a world that had moved on from, but never quite forgotten, the kingdom of Cilicia.

Epilogue

The Armenians' presence as aristocratic rulers in Cilicia extended over three hundred years, from the exodus of the highland lords in the eleventh century to the fall of the kingdom to the Mamluks in the fourteenth century. Over the course of that time, the Cilicians witnessed the advent of the Crusades, the splintering of the Seljuks, the sacking of Constantinople, the expansion and devolution of the Mongol Empire, among many other watershed moments in the region's medieval history. Managing the unwieldy breadth of this temporal scope has revealed one of the limitations of the present study. While engaging with this history through the lens of Armenian kingship has been a revelatory experience, in terms of identifying the catalysts and discourses that guide models of premodern royal authority, it has unfortunately resulted in the neglect of many crucial moments of social and political transformation from our discussion.

The aim of this dissertation has been to follow the development of the Armenian polity in Cilicia in its entirety. I have focused on moments of reimagining and rupture in order to complicate the notion of a continuous and stable kingdom. I illustrate that Armenian kingship in Cilicia was not an institution that was imported wholesale from the Armenian highlands, nor was it a Latinized Crusader Kingdom, alien to its Caucasian analogue. Rather, I have demonstrated how Armenian kingship was a dynamic and negotiated institution whose manifestation hinged on its contact with prevailing discourses of royal authority. Holding to such a broad timeline has helped me to accomplish this by permitting me to invoke a wider array of such transformations. However,

fixating on such dramatic reimaginings as the salvific king from our first chapter comes at the expense of appreciating the gradual changes that contributed to the proliferation of such discourse.

In spite of the limitations inherent in such a pursuit, this exploration has inspired several new and promising directions, in which to direct future research. Foremost among these is the notion of Cilician authority extending into the Armenian highlands. Whereas Het'um I's journey through the Armenian highlands to the court of Mongke Khan allowed for the king to establish relations with many of the Armenian lords still active in the area, this appears to have been an isolated incident. That being said, Hayton the historian's chronicle and its interest in the Armenians of the highlands seems to suggest a sustained interest in merging the two realms. However, as Sergio La Porta has illustrated with his "Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchanges in the Fourteenth Century," the goodwill between Caucasian and Cilician Armenians established by Het'um I would be eroded significantly with the advancement of Catholic missionary activities.[433] Moreover, as Hayton's chronicle was dedicated to the Pope, it seems likely that a major interest in this region, in addition to serving as a mediator for a new crusade, was to embark on more determined conversion missions. A future direction for research could be investigating how perceptions of the Armenian king fo Cilicia changed among the Armenians of the interior as the influence of the Catholic Church grew ever more powerful.

Similarly, another potential direction for this project is to expand my approach for Armenian kingship to consider perception of the Cilician king outside of Armenian sources. In particular, the Mamluk sultanate a Mediterranean power whose growth came, in large part,

[433] La Porta, "Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century," 282.

at the expense of Armenian Cilicia, is portrayed in Armenian sources as a generally malevolent force. However, as discussed at length by Angus Donald Stewart, there was a fair amount of diplomatic negotiation between the two powers.[434] Moreover, Doris Behrens-Abouseif has wondered at the Mamluks' distinction in treatment between Crusader rulers and the king of Armenian Cilicia. She notes, for example, that Mamluk sources referred to King Lewon V as a *takfūr*, which was a variant of the Armenian term for king.[435] This suggests a belief on the part of the Mamluks that the Armenian king belonged to a different category than the Crusaders. Judging from the Mamluk sultan's future negotiations with the Armenian Catholicos, this nuance may come from an understanding that Armenian Cilicia answered to a different spiritual source of legitimacy than the Crusaders.

Over the course of this dissertation, my discussion has been primarily focused on the experiences and endeavors of Armenian political actors and thinkers with regard to new ways to express royal power in Cilicia that would address the political and ideological challenges the kingdom was facing. But to what extent was Armenian Cilicia unique in this approach? In spite of the narrow focus on the Cilician case, this dissertation has shown numerous instances of intermarriage and alliance between Armenian Cilicians and the Latin crusaders. We encountered similarly diverse demographics within principalities, such as Antioch, whose influence on expressions of political power could also be explored in the future. Was the Armenian case singular in its development and experimentation within a rich discursive landscape? If not, did the challenges faced by Cilicia's neighbors overlap with the Armenian kingdom's?

[434] Stewart, *The Armenian kingdom and the Mamluks.*
[435] Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The Captivity and Release of the Armenian King Leo V in Cairo.," 57.

Future avenues for research could extend well beyond the Mediterranean to find points of comparison between Armenian Cilicia and other kingdoms further afield. We have already seen from the parallel case of the Ilkhanate that religious interlocutors actively worked to reframe the mandate of the Khans in terms that would have made their rule more palatable to the subject peoples, as well as making the prospect of conversion more attractive to their rulers. This similarity invites future comparisons from even further afield. Throughout the analysis, I have followed discourses of kingship that were drawn from Armenian sources. But future projects can also consider the robust historiography of kingship in Europe. Through several such explorations, we can approach Armenian kingship beyond the framework of crisis that has been the guiding principle of this dissertation and can construct a political theology for medieval Armenian royal authority.

Another course to pursue for expanding our understanding of the making of and remaking of Armenian kingships would be a more developed and sustained analysis of the significance of royal women in the shaping of the discursive landscape around royal authority. In the dissertation, we have encountered women of the court, such as Queen Zapēl and Soltana of Georgia, whose inclusion and treatment in the medieval historiography highlights their role in the craft of sanctifying their royal children. Zawpēl, for example, is portrayed as a willfull child who sewed chaos in the post Lewon interregnum, according to the chronicle attributed to Smbat.[436] However, her eventual acquiescence to her regent's authority precipitates her immediate redemption and assumption of the role of pious mother until her death. To that end, Vahram's chronicle also includes her in the dynastic history, and chooses to focus its attention on her piety and fertility.[437] Considering that the author's

[436] Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'*, 226.
[437] Vahram Rabuni, *Patmut'iwn Ṛubeneants'*, 219.

patron happened to be Zapēl's son can suggest that Vahram's flattering characterization of the queen may have functioned to reinforce her son's sacred suggestions.

Soltana, who was the mother of Lewon V, is likewise portrayed in a positive light in Dardel's chronicle. However, in Dardel's case, Soltana's virtues appear to have been her caution, perception, and concern for her son. After all, it was because of Lewon's mother that the Lusignan exiles were able to escape the uprising against the Catholics and flee to Cyprus.[438]In both cases, the women are discussed in the chronicles in terms of their proximity to and role in the prosperity of their respective kings. Future studies in Armenin kingship can also consider what the historiograhy's treatment of royal women can reveal in terms of genealogy and contemporary expectations of kingship.

Finally, a direction for future research with increasingly political implications is the modern interest in Armenian Cilicia's unique position as kingdom situated outside of the Armenian highlands. This apparent contradiction between a king's authority over the Armenians and his lack of authority in Armenia is a topic that has fascinated modern audiences, in addition to medieval ones. As discussed earlier in the dissertation, Hayton the historian sought to resolve the apparent contradiction by associating the kingdom with the ethnicity of its rulers, rather than with the land.[439] The Caucasian Armenians themselves engaged with this deviation by embracing its ambiguity and referring to Het'um as their own king.[440] In a modern context, however, the inconsistency takes on a particularly significant dimension. In scholarly circles, the issue of Armenian Cilicia's belonging has become a matter of classification that stretches the boundaries of Armenian Studies as a field.[441]

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[438] Ḥovhannēs Dardel, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn Hayots'*, 53-54.
[439] Het'um the Historian, *History of the Tartars*, bk. 1, chap 14.
[440] *Hayeren dzeṛagreri hishatakaranner ZhG Dar* , 322. …սուրբ արքայն ամենայն Հայոց Հեթմոյ…
[441] Mutafian, "La Place de l'Arménie Cilicienne Dan l'Arménologie."

In popular culture, the conversation is decidedly more sentimental and political. Armenian Cilicia's distinction as being the final expression of Armenian kingship is a very important component of modern nationalist discourse. It has often been employed to project an image of the Armenian nation as having a long and amicable history with the modern French, through the perception of a shared experience during the crusades. Additionally, the idea of Armenian Cilicia as a kingdom outside of Armenia carries a great deal of weight for modern diaspora Armenians. The interpretation of Armenian Cilicia as a prosperous kingdom that was responsible for the Silver Age of literary, artistic, and otherwise cultural production reinforces a sense of solidarity among Armenians of the diaspora.

The incorporation of Armenian Cilicia in discourses of Armenian nationalism is not limited to the descendants of Cilician Armenians, however. Even a cursory inspection of the coat of arms for the modern Republic of Armenia will reveal the red lion of Cilicia holding the patriarchal cross, the fourth quarter of the coat of arms.[442] The other quarters portray three other Armenian kingdoms throughout the nation's history, indicating a royal tradition stretching into the distant past.[443]

On a more poignant note, the perception of Armenian Cilicia as a prosperous and energetic kingdom serves as a bittersweet reminder of Armenians' troubled past in Anatolia in general, and in Adana in particular. In addition to serving as a painful memory for descendants of Armenian genocide survivors, Cilicia holds a particular distinction as a site of

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[442] For information on the coat of arms of Ṛubenean family see Dickran Kouymjian, "Insignes de souveraineté de Léon de Magnifique, roi arménien de Cilicie," in *Caucasus between East and West: Historical and Philological Studies in Honour of Zaza Aleksidze*, ed. Dali Chitunashvili (Tblisi: National Center of Manuscripts, 2012), 415-421, 415-416. For information on the coat of arms of the Republic of Armenia see President of the Republic of Armenia. "General Information on the Republic of Armenia." President.am. Accessed 23 January 2026. https://www.president.am/en/general-information/

[443] See President of the Republic of Armenia. "General Information on the Republic of Armenia." President.am. Accessed 23 January 2026. https://www.president.am/en/general-information/

large-scale massacres of Armenians in the final years of the nineteenth century. It is such memories that fuel nationalist and sentimental attachment to the area. One powerful example of this is the popularity of the song "Kilikia." Written in the mid-nineteenth century by Nahapet Ṛusinean, the song conveys a deep sense of nostalgia and melancholy. The song itself was based on the French poem "Ma Normandie," written by French poet Frederic Berat, and is an example of one of the earliest patriotic Armenian songs of the modern era.[444] What is immediately apparent from its lyrics is that they are written in an archaic style of Armenian. By using many grammatical constructions from the Classical Armenian of Cilicia's medieval past, the song conveys an image of lost love and beauty. Consider the final lines of the song below:

Come the day when my lyre grows cold,
Having given love a final farewell,
Let me sleep in Kilikia
The land that gave me the sun.[445]

This nostalgic rendering of this past is very powerful, and the dirge-like quality of its melody evokes feelings of lost idyll, a permanent separation from a geography that is personified as a smiling loved one. The ending that suggests that the author will rest in Cilicia when he sleeps [dies], suggests a possibility of returning to that past once he crosses the threshold of eternity. However, over the course of this dissertation, I have attempted to disenchant such perspectives by highlighting the consistently negotiated existence that was Armenian Cilicia. The notion of returning to such a past, as represented in Rusinean's song is

[444] Harry Kezelian, ""Songs of Cilicia Celebrated," *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, August 20, 2020, https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/08/20/songs-of-cilicia-celebrated/

[445] Karnig Sarskissian, "Kilikia" ["Giligia"], lyrics by Nahapet Ṛusinean, music by Kapriel Yeranian, on *Housher*, CD, 2009.
Յորժամ քնարս իմ ցրտանայ,
Սիրոյն տալով վերջին բարեւ,
Երթապ ննջեմ յիմ Կիլիկիա,
Աշխարհ՝ որ ինձ ետուր արեւ:

impossible, because such a place—a paradise caught in a stasis—never existed. Armenian Cilicia was a polity that was marked by its constant struggle to adapt to a changing geopolitical environment. Each attempt to remake its kingship seems to have been undercut by the introduction or removal of a variable that rendered the current form irrelevant. In that way, the struggle of Armenian Cilicia is the daily struggle of life. And yet, Armenian Cilicia was also a place of growth and intellectual development. It was where people encountered ideas, cultures, and aesthetics from around their known world that changed the way they thought and the values they once held dear. Depicting Armenian Cilcia as a stiff and frozen memory allows for its utilization as a blank canvas for the articulation of modern melancholic fantasies and political frustrations. However, Armenian Cilicia in general, and Armenian kingship in particular, holds the potential for much broader and more socially uplifting applications when approached through the framework of active political agency over indignance and pessmisism. Indeed, let us return to *Kilikia* only when we sleep.

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