

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE CRUSADERS' ARMENIA: CILICIA FROM 1071 TO 1148

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Armenia has always been on the periphery of European interests. The vast majority of medieval historians writing on the Middle East have focused on Byzantium, the Crusaders, and the Saracens, but there is an abundance of primary materials on Armenian history. Peter Kawerau claims that more than fifty historians and chroniclers wrote in Armenian on Armenian history from the 4th century to modern times. "There are few non-European counties whose springs of historical materials flow more richly than those of Armenia."¹

Cilicia is an ancient country. The name itself is mentioned in Hittite cuneiform records as early as 1600 B.C. Cilicia is not pictured in modern atlases, but its ancient borders roughly correspond to those of the modern Turkish provinces of Adana and Maras. It has a Mediterranean coast of about 75 miles and it is bordered by the Taurus, Antitaurus and Amanus Mountains.

Cilicia itself is a natural border between Asia Minor and Syria. With an area of only 10,000 square miles, it is too small to be a great power. Its larger neighbors have often fought to control its strategic points and natural resources. It was the border of the Muslim caliphates and Byzantine Empire from 640 to 965 A.D. It was a war zone then and later from 1071 until the middle of the 14th century.

Armenia became connected with Cilicia in the Middle Ages when the Byzantines reconquered Cilicia, expelled its

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Muslim population and opened it to Christian settlement. Armenians came in great numbers and Cilicia became Armenian. Some settled in Cilicia's mountains, but more settled in Cilicia's coastal and interior plains with their deep and relatively fertile soils. The Mediterranean climate of Cilicia was not unlike that of Armenia proper, but the Cilician summers were extremely hot and dry--the hottest in southwestern Asia. The winters were cool and rainy and provided enough rainfall for Mediterranean agriculture. Some two hundred years after the settlement began, Cilicia became an independent Armenian kingdom.

This kingdom is sometimes called Lesser Armenia or Armenia Minor and is often misrepresented in histories of the Crusades. Examples include a map in an atlas of the Crusades which depicts Cilicia as Armenian on the eve of the First Crusade² and a biography of Raymond III of Tripoli which says that the mid-12th century Crusader kingdoms could rely on aid from the Kingdom of Armenia.³ The first example suggests that Cilicia was free of Muslim control, but all of it was ruled by Seljuk emirs in 1097. The second errs because Armenian Cilicia did not become a kingdom until the end of the 12th century in 1198--eleven years after Saladin took Jerusalem.

Armenian primary sources are the wellspring of the history of Armenian Cilicia, but such sources by themselves are inadequate. Byzantine accounts and the accounts of William of Tyre and Fulcher of Chartres also offer considerable information on Cilician history and all too often they are overlooked. The major contemporary accounts of the early Crusade era in Armenian, the *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* and its *Continuation by Gregory the Priest*, are now available in English. *Sempad's Chronicle* written in the 13th century and *Vahram's Chronicle* written in the 14th century are also significant. Portions of *Sempad's Chronicle*⁴ and all of *Vahram's Chronicle* have also been translated into

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English.

The early history of Armenian Cilicia divides logically into two periods. The first period starts with the beginning of Armenian settlement in the 10th century and ends with the arrival of the Crusaders in 1097. Armenians began settling in Cilicia in large numbers shortly after the Byzantines reconquered it from the Abbasid Caliphate in August 965. The Muslim population was expelled or fled and the new lands were opened to Christian settlement. Few Greeks seem to have emigrated to Cilicia, but enough Armenians emigrated there to establish an Armenian episcopal see in Tarsus in the 10th century.⁵ Great waves of immigration began, however, when the Byzantines conquered greater Armenia in 1045.⁶ Still more came after the decisive victory of the Turks over the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071.

Greek, but not Armenian sources, tell us that the Byzantine emperor appointed a certain Philaretos Brachiamos, an Armenian of the Greek Orthodox faith, as *Strategos Autokrator* in Melitene, east of Cilicia, to defend Cappadocia against Turkish raids two years before the disaster at Manzikert.⁷ After Manzikert, Philaretos rebelled against the new Byzantine emperor and expanded his authority to include Cilicia.⁸ The legally appointed Armenian Governor of Tarsus in Cilicia declined to oppose the rebel Philaretos and recognized his authority in 1073.⁹ Matthew of Edessa first mentions Philaretos as adding Antioch to his domains in 1076-77 and Edessa in 1077-78. This took place as still more Armenians immigrated into Cilicia. Matthew of Edessa tells us that widespread famine in Armenia led to a mass migration to Cilicia in the years 1079 and 1080.¹⁰

The turning point in Philaretos' career came in 1084-85 when the Turks seized Antioch. They took still more territory from him the next year and seized his capital in 1086-87, compelling him to submit. Rumor had it that Philaretos accepted Islam, but the

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Turks deposed him anyway.¹¹ In the years following, the Turks held the rich cities of Tarsus, Adana, Mamistra, and Alexandretta on the plains of Cilicia.¹²

The Turks thus ruled all of Cilicia on the eve of the Crusade, excepting some petty baronies in the Taurus Mountains notably those commanding the strategic Cilician Gates. Areas to the east of Cilicia also had Armenian governors, but they seem to have been Turkish tributaries. The most significant Armenian ruler of the period was Kogh Vasil who ruled a small area of perhaps 600 square miles, judging from a scaled map, in the valley of the Euphrates River.^{13 14} He eagerly supported the Crusaders and even furnished them guides for the route from Constantinople to Antioch.

The next logical period in the history of Armenian Cilicia begins with the arrival of the Crusaders and ends with Leon II's accession to Barony in 1186. Toumanoff writes that this period "was one of steady, if interrupted, growth, and of struggle with foes from several quarters..."¹⁵ He claims that Leon I already held all of eastern Cilicia by 1133. Der Nersessian, on the other hand, recognizes that the Crusader era in Cilicia was a rather complicated struggle between Armenian clans, Byzantines and Crusaders for the control of the country.¹⁶ The establishment of Armenian sovereignty in Cilicia was contingent on events which could have developed differently.

Der Nersessian, Hild, Boase, and Hamilton all tell of the arrival of the Crusaders and repeat Toumanoff's claim that Leon I seized eastern Cilicia,¹⁷ but Matthew of Edessa, Fulcher of Chartres, William of Tyre, and Byzantine sources fail to mention it. Matthew tells us that the Crusaders passed through Cilicia en route to Antioch and goes on to say that various Armenian princes, monks and the whole Christian population sent them provisions during the siege of Antioch.¹⁸

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Crusader accounts offer more details. William of Tyre says that Tancred split off from the main Crusader army in early September 1097 and passed through the Cilician Gates to besiege Tarsus. Baldwin of Boulogne also left the main army about the same time with an even larger party and forced Tancred to leave Tarsus before it surrendered. Tancred then moved on to Adana which the Armenian Oshin had recently seized from the Turks. He refused to admit Tancred who marched on Mamistra and seized it.¹⁹

Baldwin, who had taken and garrisoned Tarsus, followed Tancred to Mamistra; their men skirmished, but the two leaders settled their quarrel. Baldwin then marched off to rejoin the main army which had just deposed the Turkish emir of Marash²⁰ on the crest of the Amanus Mountains. The main army then marched south along the east slope of the Amanus Mountains without entering Cilicia.

Tancred remained in Cilicia and overran the rest of it, including the port of Alexandretta. He also threatened or was seen as a threat to the petty baronies in the mountains. "Turkish and Armenian satraps who dwelt in the mountains... hastened to send envoys bearing immense gifts of gold and silver, horses, mules and silken stuff."²¹ Tancred apparently accepted some of them as vassals for Vahram says he bestowed the titles of Count and Marquis on one of them.²²

The main army reached Antioch in October 1097 and Tancred left Cilicia to join them. William of Tyre claims that Tancred "had brought the whole district under his control"²³ and kept it under his control. In February 1098, however, the Emperor Alexius' military representative, who was supposed to take control of areas reconquered by the Crusaders on behalf of the Emperor, transferred Cilicia to Bohemund²⁴ who used the transfer as his authority to oust Tancred.

Alexius indignantly rejected the arrangements negotiated

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with Bohemund, now Prince of Antioch, and dispatched troops to bring Cilicia under his control in 1099-1100.²⁵ Matthew and others say that Bohemund attacked Cilicia in 1100. Matthew does not say that he recaptured it.²⁶ In 1101, the Turks captured Bohemund and Tancred became his regent. According to Hild, he was able to recapture Mamistra, Adana and Tarsus²⁷ for he returned them to Bohemund when his regency ended in 1104. The Byzantines continued to control western Cilicia.²⁸

Bohemund refused a Byzantine ultimatum on Cilicia a few months later. Byzantine forces promptly seized the disputed area as well as portions of the Principality of Antioch proper. Bohemund then returned to Europe to enlist reinforcements for an attack on European Byzantium. Tancred was again appointed as his regent. Bohemund, unfortunately from his viewpoint, was defeated in Europe in 1108. The Treaty of Diabolis required him to surrender virtually all of Cilicia to the Emperor,²⁹ but his regent Tancred ignored the treaty. In 1109 and 1110 he retook the Cilician plain. The Principality of Antioch now "included northern Syria and Cilicia with the important cities of Tarsus, Mamistra and Adana."³⁰

Some Armenian barons were clearly vassals of Antioch at this time, including Oshin of Lambrun.³¹ Another baron, T'oros, had apparently regained some independence, ruling the Antitaurus and the adjoining plains.³² He pursued friendly relations with the Latin rulers of Antioch and Edessa. Matthew accuses him of failing to resist a Seljuk raid into Cilicia in 1110-11.³³ In the wake of the raid, however, T'oros took possession of the castle of Anazarba and made it into his principal residence.³⁴ This castle was an enclave inside Antiochene territory. Would Tancred have allowed T'oros to hold it, except as payment for services past or future against, say, the Turks?

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Armenians outside of Cilicia also attempted to pursue friendly relations with the quarrelsome Latins, but this was not always possible. Ibn Al-Qalanisi tells about an Armenian mercenary garrison which surrendered to the Muslims in 1104-05 "because of the injustice and grievous tyranny which they suffered from the Franks."³⁵ Matthew tells of a revolt in Edessa against Frankish rule due to religious persecution of the Armenians in 1105-06. Cruelty and intolerance were typical of Frankish rule in Edessa and probably in Cilicia. Matthew tells us that nobles and notables "died in prison, either in chains or by torture..." These cruelties "had only one aim and purpose--to seize the treasures; it was for this reason that the Franks devastated and ruined the land..."³⁶

Armenians in Cilicia often sided with Crusaders against their fellow Armenians. In 1116, for example, T'oros captured Kogh Vasil's successor and handed him over to Baldwin of le Bourcq who then annexed his territories and expelled him to Byzantium, but T'oros did offer asylum to other barons who fell victim to Baldwin in 1117-18. The following year he dispatched his brother and successor, Leon, to help Crusaders attack a Muslim force near Aleppo.³⁷

Matthew mentions nothing about Cilician political affairs between 1119 and 1137, not even T'oros' death in 1129. He resumes the narrative with a report that John II Comnenus removed Leon from power in 1137 and exiled him to Constantinople.³⁸ The period just before the Byzantine intervention is a curious one. Sempad and Vahram both report that Leon seized Tarsus, Adana and Mamistra from the Franks in 1132.³⁹ Sempad claims that Leon then invaded Antiochene territory proper. He was taken captive by a trick by Raymond of Poitiers and released only on payment of ransom and the return of the territories recently conquered--a slightly garbled version of events first recounted by John Kinnamos

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since Raymond had not yet arrived in Antioch and was not involved in the affair.⁴⁰

John Kinnamos also writes that Leon took several cities from the Byzantines in Isauria between 1132 and 1136 and that he besieged the Byzantine fortress of Seleukia.⁴¹ This account is just as confused as those of Sempad and Vahram. A more likely version of events is that Leon revolted against Antioch on the death of Bohemund in 1130. He was captured and imprisoned, but this did not end the revolt he had begun. His captors persuaded Leon to return some territories and to turn his forces against Byzantium from 1132 to 1136. This--along with the breach of the proposed marriage alliance between Antioch and Byzantium--provoked a fierce Byzantine response, a response that neither Crusaders nor Armenians anticipated. Leon was released from captivity, on payment of a ransom, to organize a defense of Cilicia against John Comnenus and he did this rather successfully. The siege of Anazarba took considerable time and effort.⁴²

John Kinnamos explain John's invasion and conquest of Antioch in 1137 in much greater detail than Matthew of Edessa and William of Tyre. The Emperor claimed that Antioch was his of right and invaded Antioch's territory after Constance, Bohemund II's daughter and heir, rejected Manuel, his fourth son, and wed Raymond of Poitiers.⁴³ William does not mention the rejection of Manuel and just writes that Raymond was occupied in battles in the Latin states and returned to Antioch when he learned of John's invasion.⁴⁴

Vasiliev writes that John's invasion was intended to punish Armenian rebels in Cilicia who had concluded an alliance hostile to Byzantium with the Latins.⁴⁵ Vasiliev's account reflects the real nature of the Byzantine-Crusader-Armenian relationship. The desire to annex Antioch was a maximum goal and Cilicia an acceptable morsel. William is unreliable about the background

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and underlying causes. He even claims that "the prince of Antioch had held [Cilicia] in undisputed possession for forty years."⁴⁶

Already mentioned is Leon's deportation to Constantinople.⁴⁷ To this, Ibn Al-Qalanisi adds that some of the population of Adana, Mamistra, Anazarza and other places were also deported to Cyprus.⁴⁸ John completed his conquest in 1138.⁴⁹ He returned in 1142 intending to add Antioch to the Empire, but died in Cilicia without accomplishing this in early 1143. Manuel, his successor and youngest son, returned to Constantinople to secure the throne leaving relatively weak garrisons to hold Cilicia.

John's invasions weakened Antioch and Antioch's ability to aid other Crusader principalities. The flow of men, material, and money from western Europe was interrupted. Is it only coincidence that Zengi took Edessa in 1144? Or that Joscelin could not muster the force to retake it in 1146 after Zengi's death?

John's invasions had considerably less impact on Cilicia in the long term for the Armenians did not depend on overseas aid. They were numerous and settled in Cilicia.

Conditions ripened for a renewed rebellion in the years after Manuel withdrew. The Crusaders lost the County of Edessa to Zengi in 1144 and Zengi's successor, Nur ed-Din, was absorbed in consolidating his power at home. His Byzantine counterpart, Manuel, was struggling to consolidate his power in Constantinople. Leon's son T'oros II escaped confinement and returned to Cilicia. Vahram writes that T'oros II took Anazarza and Vahka and was elected Baron in 1143. Gregory adds that he "gained control of more fortresses and towns than his predecessors had possessed."⁵⁰ Manuel was forced to deal with a Seljuk invasion of Isauria in 1146-47, but his efforts were not completely successful.⁵¹ A few months later the Turks were still strong enough to destroy those elements of the Second Crusade who tried to cross Asia Minor.⁵² This made a Crusader or Byzantine intervention in

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Cilicia unlikely. Manuel's governor in Cilicia, Andronicus Comnenus, vainly attempted to suppress T'oros' rebellion with his own forces, but he was defeated at Mamistra in 1148 and deported to Constantinople.⁵³ The Armenian rebellion was successful--for the time being. But, the Empire did strike back and forty years would pass before the independence of Armenian Cilicia was consolidated and recognized.

Philaretos, Vasil, Oshin, and T'oros sought to recreate polities like those they had known--the Byzantine Empire and the kingdoms it had destroyed in greater Armenia. Leon recognized the need to rid Cilicia of the Crusaders, but was forced to ally himself with Antioch as a junior partner against Byzantium. He shared in their defeat. T'oros II realized his father's objectives, but was also forced to swallow the bitter pill of defeat and accept Byzantine suzerainty. It was left to Leon II to secure the independence of the Barony and its recognition as an independent Kingdom. Cilicia was the longest lived of the mainland states created by the Crusaders, but it too fell to Mameluke Egypt in the 14th century.

The Ottomans took the area for their own a hundred years later and since then it has remained Turkish. The persecution and genocide committed by the Turks against the Armenians in the early 20th century removed the Armenian population from Cilicia. French cruisers evacuated the last Armenian refugees from the area in 1923.

NOTES

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4. Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "The Armenian Chronicle of the Constable Smpad or of the 'Royal Historian,'" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XIII (1959) (Cambridge, 1959), 145n.

5. Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia" in *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 2, ed. by Robert Lee Wolf and Harry W. Hazzard (Madison, 1969).

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7. *Michaelis Attoliotae historia*, ed. by I. Bekker (Bonn, 1853). Cited in Friedrich Hild and Hansgerd Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien, Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, Band 5 (Vienna, 1990), 63.

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9. Hild, 63.

10. Matthew, II, 66, 71 and 73.

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13. Der Nersessian, "The Kingdom...", 632.
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17. Der Nersessian, "The Kingdom...", 636; T. S. R. Boase, "The History of the Kingdom" in *The Cilician Kingdom of Armenia*. ed. by T. S. R. Boase. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1-33; Bernard Hamilton, "The Armenian Church and the Papacy at the Time of the Crusades," *Eastern Churches Review*, 10 (1979), p. 65; and, Hild, 69.
18. Matthew, II, 113 and 114.
19. William, 178-182.
20. William, 185.
21. William, 185.

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22. Vahram, *Vahram's Chronicle of the Armenian Kingdom During the Time of the Crusades*, trans. by Charles Friedrich Neumann (London, 1831), 498.

23. William, 197.

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25. *Gesta Tancredi* cited in Hild, 67.

26. Matthew of Edessa, II, 133 and 134; Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades*, 2nd ed. (1965), trans. by John Gillingham (Oxford, 1972, 1988), 65; Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1195-1127*. trans. by Frances Rita Ryan. Knoxville, 1969), 135.

27. Hild, 67.

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30. Dana Carleton Munro, *The Kingdom of the Crusaders* (Port Washington, 1935), 1966.

31. "Albertus Aquensis Historia Hierosolymitana" *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens occidentaux* 4, 683 cited in Hild, 68.

32. Comnena, III, 134.

33. Matthew, III, 49.

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34. Hild, 68.

35. Ibn Al-Qalanisi, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*. extracted and trans. by H. A. R. Gibb (London, 1932, 1967), 69.

36. Matthew, III, 30 and 74.

37. Matthew, III, 73, 74 and 78.

38. Matthew, III, 109.

39. Sempad, 614 cited in Hild, 69f; Vahram, 31.

40. John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. by Charles M. Brand (New York, 1976), 16.

41. Kinnamos, 16.

42. Kinnamos, 17 and 18.

43. Kinnamos, 16 and 17.

44. William, 2: 80-84.

45. Vasiliev, 415.

46. William, 2: 84.

47. Matthew, III, 109.

48. Ibn Al-Qalanisi, 241.

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50. Gregory, 26.

51. Kinnamos, 39-49; Nicetae Chon, 50 in Hild, 70n.

52. Mayer, 101.

53. Gregory, 26.