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# The Crusaders through Armenian Eyes

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The impact of the Franks on various aspects of Armenian life and culture in the principality, then kingdom, of Cilician Armenia has long attracted attention. Significant changes in Armenian social institutions and religious attitudes were brought about by direct contacts with Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and these have been studied with varying degrees of thoroughness over many years. One less tangible aspect of Crusader influence, however, has not attracted the same attention as developments in art, religion, language, and other facets of life in Cilicia.<sup>1</sup> That is the way in which Armenians, both those in Cilicia who came into personal contact with the Crusaders and those in Greater Armenia who experienced the Crusades less directly, interpreted the arrival of the Frankish armies. How were the Crusades fitted into an Armenian worldview?

By the time of the Crusades there was a long-standing tradition of historical writing in Armenian, going back to the fifth century. Over a period of more than six hundred years, Armenian writers had had to come to terms with numerous vicissitudes.<sup>2</sup> Even if the arrival of the Crusaders was generally interpreted in positive terms—rather than as yet another calamity, like the arrival of the Turks—nonetheless, it caused a fairly radical upset in the eastern Mediterranean which merited more than a casual reference.

Previous upheavals, like the Muslim advance of the seventh century, or the arrival of the Turks in the eleventh, had been placed by Armenian writers in a broad framework.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is an excellent and up-to-date general bibliography in P. Halfter, *Das Papsttum und die Armenier im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters, Beihefte zu J. F. Böhmer, *Regesta Imperii*, 15 (Cologne-Weimar-Vienna, 1996). For linguistic change add J. J. S. Weitenberg, "Literary Contacts in Cilician Armenia," in *East and West in the Crusader States*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 75 (Louvain, 1996), 63–72; and for developments in miniature painting, S. Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, 2 vols., DOS 31 (Washington, D.C., 1993), and the dissertation of Helen Evans, "Manuscript Illumination at the Armenian Patriarchate in Hromkla and the West" (New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> For early Armenian historical writing see J.-P. Mahé, "Entre Moïse et Mahomet: Réflexions sur l'historiographie arménienne," *REArm* 23 (1992): 121–53. For details of editions and translations of Armenian historians, see R. W. Thomson, *A Bibliography of Classical Armenian Literature to 1500 A.D.*, CC (Turnhout, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Sebēos, writing near the end of the 7th century, is the first Armenian historian to discuss the Islamic conquests; see commentary and discussion in R. W. Thomson, J. Howard-Johnston, and T. Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebēos*, *Translated Texts for Historians* 31 (Liverpool, 1999). For the Armenian response to the Turkish invasions, see M. Canard and H. Berbérian, *Aristakès de Lastivert: Récit des Malheurs de la Nation arménienne*, *Bibliothèque de Byzantion* 5 (Brussels, 1973).

Historians had looked backwards to seek out links with past events in Armenian history (real or imagined), and forwards with visions of deliverance from present foes and the inauguration of an era of peace and well-being. When in turn the Mongols came upon the scene, the Armenians already possessed a framework of interpretation that could be adjusted and adapted to these new circumstances. How, then, were the Crusades integrated into an Armenian scheme of things?

Interpretations took some time to emerge. Until the late twelfth century there is a surprising paucity of references to the Crusaders and a general lack of interest in the West as such. Some Armenians played a role in the new developments, which in Cilicia completely changed the character of traditional Armenian life. But the majority, those in Greater Armenia, had little direct experience of the Crusaders. So the “Armenian eyes” to which the title of this paper refers are not necessarily those of actual witnesses to events in Cilicia and northern Syria. Here I shall pay more attention to those Armenians who reflected on the Crusades and tried to integrate them into their own approach to the past, than to Armenian descriptions of events in Syria and Palestine.

But first a few words on the immediate reaction of Armenians before the historians had had time to consider these broader issues. Since Armenian scribes had the welcome habit of adding detailed colophons to the manuscripts they were copying, we have some interesting comments on the arrival of the Crusaders which are contemporary with the events described.<sup>4</sup>

The first Armenian to describe the Crusaders was writing in 1098 on the Black Mountain near Antioch. In his colophon to a collection of canon law,<sup>5</sup> a certain John describes the coming of “the western nation of heroes” who had crossed the sea in order to expel the foreign tyrants who held in dishonor the holy [places] and priests of God. The Westerners are not specifically called “Crusaders,” but the scribe does note that “they had set before themselves the sign of Christ’s Cross.”

The following year the scribe Aaron, copying a Gospel in Alexandria,<sup>6</sup> dates his book to the patriarchate of Lord Gregory—that is, Grigor II Vkasasēr, who was then residing in Egypt<sup>7</sup>—and to the empire of the valiant race of Romans, “who are the Franks, who

<sup>4</sup> For a general overview of Armenian colophons and their characteristics, see A. K. Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301–1480: A Source for Middle Eastern History*, Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 2 (Cambridge, Mass., 1969). The colophons quoted below are taken from the collections published by A. S. Mat’evosyan, *Hayeren Je’agrac’ Hišatakaranner, E–ŽB daver* (Erevan, 1988), for the 5th to 12th centuries; and G. Yovsep’ean, *Yišatakarank’ Je’agrac’* (Beirut, 1951), down to 1250.

<sup>5</sup> Mat’evosyan, 117–19, Yovsep’ean, 259–64. The MS is now in New Julfa, no. 542. This famous colophon was first brought to general attention by P. Peeters, “Un témoignage autographe sur le siège d’Antioche par les croisés en 1098,” *Miscellanea historica in honorem Alberti de Meyer*, vol. 1, Recueil de travaux d’histoire de l’Université de Louvain, 3d ser., 22 (Louvain, 1946), reprinted in his *Recherches d’histoire et de philologie orientales*, Subshag 27 (Brussels, 1951), 2:164–80.

<sup>6</sup> Mat’evosyan, 119–21. The MS, a Gospel, is now in Erevan, Matenadaran no. 288.

<sup>7</sup> This Gregory, son of Gregory Magistros Pahlavuni, had been consecrated catholicos in 1065, but he left his administrative duties to a coadjutor and devoted his life to the study of hagiography. “Vkasasēr” means “lover of martyrs.” He spent much of his life traveling in search of new texts to translate into Armenian. See A. Kapoian-Kouymjian, “Le Catholicos Grégoire II le Martyrophile (Vkasasēr) et ses pérégrinations,” *Bazma-vep* 132 (1974): 306–25; and S. B. Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians*, Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts 18 (Leiden, 1997), 85–90.

had come at God's instigation." Aaron describes the battle for Antioch and notes more briefly the capture of Jerusalem, when through the power of Christ, a host of the impious had been put to the sword. Less flattering to the Franks is a later colophon of 1130,<sup>8</sup> whose author dates his work both to the Armenian era and to the "tyranny" of the Franks under Count Joscelin. Here "tyranny" [*binakalut'iwu*] is the same word as is used of Saladin's rule in Egypt, Damascus, and Edessa in a colophon of 1183.<sup>9</sup>

The Crusader kings are occasionally named by scribes. Thus Frederick Barbarossa is the *Alaman*, while Henry VI becomes "Heri, emperor of old Rome."<sup>10</sup> Their country of origin is rarely specified, though in 1198 a scribe in the monastery of Hałbat in northern Armenia mentions kings who had come from the regions of Italy, and even across the Atlantic Ocean, that is, from England.<sup>11</sup> However, in Nersēs Šnorhali's *Lament on the Fall of Edessa*, we read that the Latins came from Dalmatia.<sup>12</sup> "Dalmatia" for Italy was quite common in Armenian, and Latin was commonly called "Dalmatian." According to the Armenian version of the Gospels, the inscription over the cross of Christ was written in Hebrew, Greek, and "Dalmatian."<sup>13</sup>

Armenian authors generally refer to the Westerners as Franks, Romans, or Latins. The equivalent of the term "Crusader" is hardly ever applied to them. In his *Lament for the Fall of Edessa*, Nersēs Šnorhali does refer in a general way to the "worshippers of the holy Cross," who failed to come to the support of Count Joscelin II.<sup>14</sup> But only once does the Armenian word "Crusader" appear. A Bible written in 1270 includes a colophon that is taken from the end of Nersēs of Lambron's *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*. It is there noted: "Jerusalem fell at the completion of ninety years of the rule of the Romans. . . . Then the king of Rome who is German, and other kings, came to recover Jerusalem as *xac'enkalk'*"—which means "those who had taken up the cross."<sup>15</sup> A similar expression, *xac'akir*, "one who bears the cross," is used in Armenian from the fifth century.<sup>16</sup> It is applied to monks or ascetics and is a calque on the Greek *staurophóros*. That is the modern

<sup>8</sup> Mat'evosyan, 158. The MS, a copy of Elišē's *History*, is now in Erevan, Matenadaran no. 4515. It was written in the region of Tluk' at the monastery of St. Paul; the site is not known and does not appear in M. Thierry, *Répertoire des monastères arméniens*, CC (Turnhout, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Mat'evosyan, 235–36. The MS, a Gospel, is now in Erevan, Matenadaran no. 3133.

<sup>10</sup> Mat'evosyan, 301–2. The MS, a copy of the Revelation of John, is now in Erevan, Matenadaran no. 10480; although it is dated to 1286, it reproduces the comments of Nersēs of Lambron, who had translated the Revelation from Greek in 1198.

<sup>11</sup> Mat'evosyan, 296. The MS, a copy of the Commentary on Jeremiah by Mxit'ar Goš, is now in Erevan, Matenadaran no. 2606.

<sup>12</sup> I. Kéchichian, *Nersēs Šnorhali: La complainte d'Edesse*, Bibliotheca Armeniaca 3 (Venice, 1984), 41, being line 518 of the poem. There are many editions of the Armenian text; see Thomson, *Bibliography*, 179.

<sup>13</sup> Luke 23:38; John 19:20. For "Dalmatia" cf. the *History* of Agat'angelos, para. 874, where St. Gregory and King Trdat arrive in Rome to greet Emperor Constantine: "By land and sea they hastened on their way until they arrived in the empire of the Italians, in the land of the Dalmatians, in the royal capital of Rome." Armenian text with facing translation in R. W. Thomson, *Agathangelos: History of the Armenians* (Albany, N.Y., 1976), 409. This legendary encounter will play a prominent role in later Armenian tradition; see further below.

<sup>14</sup> Kéchichian, *La complainte*, 33, line 393.

<sup>15</sup> Mat'evosyan, 249. The MS, a Bible, is now in Erevan, Matenadaran no. 345.

<sup>16</sup> The earliest example is in Koriwn's *Life of Maštoc'*, chap. 4. Armenian text in M. Abelyan, *Vark' Maštoc' i* (Erevan, 1941; repr. Delmar, N.Y., 1985), 38; trans. in G. Winkler, *Koriwns Biographie des Mesrop Maštoc'*, OCA 245 (Rome, 1994).

Armenian term to render “Crusader,” but except for this colophon I have not found it in medieval authors.

Colophons do not provide a very solid basis for generalizations, given the haphazard survival of Armenian manuscripts and the fact that only those in major collections have been published. Nonetheless, it is noticeable that scribes pay relatively little attention to the Crusaders. The historians, however, began to see broader significance in the arrival of the Franks than the instigation of God and the punishment of the infidels. Matthew of Edessa, whose own work goes down to 1136, is the first to offer an interpretation. He bases it on the Bible and on earlier Armenian traditions. The arrival of these Franks was in fulfillment of the prophecy of the Armenian patriarch Nersēs the Great at the time of his death and of Daniel’s vision of the beast [Daniel 7:7]. The Continuator to Matthew even claims that the subsequent recapture of Jerusalem by the infidels was also predicted by Nersēs.<sup>17</sup>

This Nersēs lived in the fourth century, but his first biographer gives no indication that he was possessed of such extraordinary prophetic powers. According to the author of the *Epic Histories* or *Buzandaran* (widely, if incorrectly, known as P’awstos), Nersēs had rebuked king Aršak for his evil ways and bade him redeem himself from the wrath of God, so that “this unfortunate realm of Armenia may not perish on account of you! For I have seen a vision that perdition and destruction are advancing on this doomed realm of Armenia.”<sup>18</sup> Our fifth-century author had in mind the division of Armenia into Roman and Iranian sectors, which occurred in 387, some fourteen years after Nersēs’ death. But naturally this hint was enough to encourage later writers to update the prediction.

In the tenth century an elaborate *Life of Nersēs* was composed; it is attributed to a priest Mesrop from Vayoc’ Jor in Siunik’.<sup>19</sup> In turn this *Life* was subjected to later revisions. Unfortunately we possess no study of the progressive recensions of the text, but it was from a version of the later *Life of Nersēs*, not from the fifth-century *Epic Histories*, that Matthew of Edessa took his prediction, which had already been removed from its place in the original narrative and put to the time of Nersēs’ death.

According to this later form of the prediction, after fifty years the priestly line of St. Gregory and the royal line of the Arsacids would come to an end. This refers to the abolition of the monarchy in 428. One hundred and fifty years after that the Persians will capture Jerusalem and take the Cross captive, which is not very exact reckoning in order to bring us to 614. When the Cross is returned the Greeks will no longer rule over Jerusalem; the Ishmaelites will replace them. The latter will subject the Greeks to tribute until the time of the coming of the valiant race of the Romans, who are called Franks,

<sup>17</sup> Matthew of Edessa, 2.109 and 124. Armenian text, *Patmut’iwn Matt’ēosi Ufhayec’woy* (Jerusalem, 1869), 306, 325; trans. in A. E. Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* (Lanham, Md., 1993). Continuator, 41; Armenian text, 539.

<sup>18</sup> *Buzandaran*, 4.13. Armenian text, *P’awstosi Buzandac’woy Patmut’iwn Hayoc’* (Venice, 1933); trans. in N. G. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories (Buzandaran Patmut’iwnk’)*, Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 8 (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).

<sup>19</sup> *Patmut’iwn srboyn Nersisi Part’ewi, Sop’erk’ 1* (Venice, 1853); trans. in J.-R. Emine, “Généalogie de la famille de saint Grégoire et vie de saint Nersès,” in *Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l’Arménie*, ed. V. Langlois, vol. 2 (Paris, 1969), 21–41.

who will capture Jerusalem and remove the subjection of the Greeks. As for Armenia, numerous afflictions will befall the country, including the oppression of the “Archers.” This is an expression usually associated with the Mongols, but it is also used of the Seljuks.<sup>20</sup> Eventually salvation will come from the Romans.

Matthew of Edessa’s language is so vague that it is not clear whether in his mind Daniel’s fourth beast represents the Crusaders, who will devour and trample the enemies of Christ, or whether it stands for Muslim rule, now to be destroyed. The first Armenian to identify the Muslims with Daniel’s fourth beast was Sebēos who, writing some time soon after 660, tried to come to terms with this new power in the East.<sup>21</sup> Sebēos, however, has no optimistic forecast of deliverance from these new disasters. He was unacquainted with the prophecies contained in the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, which was composed in Syriac in the last decade of that century.

Although an Armenian version of that *Apocalypse* has been attributed to the eighth-century Armenian scholar Step‘annos of Siunik,<sup>22</sup> only much later was the key motif of the last things incorporated into Armenian thought. One of the later adaptors of the *Life of Nersēs* not only interpreted the kingdom of the new Romans, the Crusaders, as the fourth kingdom of Daniel’s vision; he also explained that it would be destroyed by Anti-Christ, preceding the final coming of Christ in glory. Matthew of Edessa, however, was not influenced by this later version of the *Life of Nersēs*. He does not interpret the Crusaders as harbingers of the last things.

An even older Armenian tradition involving the West, long predating the Crusades, was now associated with these new circumstances. This is the supposed meeting between the newly converted kings Constantine and Trdat of Armenia, who were accompanied by their patriarchs, Silvester and Gregory the Illuminator. Whether the original story is an adapted reminiscence of the visit to Nero’s court of Trdat I, or whether it reflects some subsequent treaty between Rome and Armenia, is unclear.<sup>23</sup> In any event, with certain variations, it is enshrined in Armenian literature from the earliest texts of the fifth century. It may be cited in a military context to recall earlier Roman assistance to Armenia, or in an ecclesiastical context to demonstrate the orthodoxy of Armenian faith and practice, mutually confirmed by these Christian monarchs even before the Council of Nicaea. The arrival of the Crusaders, normally called “Romans” by Matthew and most

<sup>20</sup> For the name see R. P. Blake and R. N. Frye, “History of the Nation of the Archers (the Mongols) by Grigor of Akanc’,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12 (1949): 269–399, esp. 384 n. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Sebēos, 177. In this edition of the Armenian text, Abgaryan has changed the order of the last section as found in the MSS, putting the prediction of disasters to the very end of the *History*. According to the MSS, it seems that Sebēos ended his first draft with a prophecy of devastation, but later returned to his text in order to add a brief description of the Muslim civil war, ending with the triumph of Muawiya in 661. The original pessimistic tone was thus modified: Sebēos regarded the imposition of the new régime as bringing a de facto settlement. See the English translation, as in note 3 above.

<sup>22</sup> But see further below at notes 35 and 54.

<sup>23</sup> The story first appears in Agat’angelos; see note 13 above. But in the earliest version of the visit, the bishop of Rome is called Eusebius. Silvester does not enter the Armenian tradition until Movsēs Xorenac’i (of disputed date, but probably 8th century) and the Arabic version of the V recension of Agat’angelos. For the latter see G. Garitte, *Documents pour l’étude du livre d’Agathange*, ST 127 (Vatican City, 1946). The evidence of these and later texts has been collected in R. W. Thomson, “Constantine and Trdat in Armenian Tradition,” *Acta Orientalia* 50 (1997): 201–13.

other Armenian historians,<sup>24</sup> immediately made this old tradition topical. The story of the meeting of Trdat with Constantine underwent elaborate developments in Cilicia; and at the same time a major theme of the Pseudo-Methodian *Apocalypse* was woven into the tale, namely, the introduction of the Romans into predictions of the coming of Anti-Christ and the last things.

In Greater Armenia during the twelfth century the Crusaders were still not viewed in prophetic terms. The historian Samuel of Ani—here relying on the lost *Chronicle* of John the Deacon, also of Ani—briefly describes the perfidious attitude of Alexios II, “the son of Satan,” toward the Crusaders.<sup>25</sup> These Romans had come to seek vengeance for the troubles suffered by the Christians at the hands of the Scythians (Turks), Persians, and Arabs. In Samuel’s time, Ani was under Georgian control, and although he mentions the capture of Jerusalem and refers to later events in Cilicia and Palestine, in the broader Armenian perspective the Crusades were not the main focus of his attention. There is certainly no suggestion that the Crusades fitted into a grand scheme of things that had been dimly apprehended by Patriarch Nersēs many centuries earlier.

In Cilicia, on the other hand, an unknown author of the late twelfth century did develop an elaborate scenario combining earlier Armenian traditions with apocalyptic ideas from Pseudo-Methodius and other writers, in which the arrival of the Crusaders plays a major role.<sup>26</sup> Disguised as a homily, this document was ascribed to Epiphanius of Salamis (to whom were also attributed the apocryphal Lives of the Prophets, for example) rather than to an Armenian authority such as Nersēs or his grandson Sahak.<sup>27</sup> With many reminiscences of the fall of Ani to the Byzantines and the arrival of the Turks, the homily refers back to the visit of Trdat and Gregory to Rome at the summons of Constantine.<sup>28</sup> However, the author adds the interesting information that the two kings and their patriarchs proceeded to visit Jerusalem, where they divided the holy places between the two parties. The holy sites are not here identified, though later versions of the story will be very precise on this point.

Coming to events of the future, the author predicts that in due time a new Constantine and a new Trdat and Gregory will be born. They will trample on the infidels and come to Jerusalem, inaugurating a period of peace. Eventually Anti-Christ will arise, only to be destroyed before the Second Coming. But the author does not know the time of these last things. We have here the first intimation in Armenian of the themes found

<sup>24</sup> E.g., Samuel of Ani, Kirakos of Ganjak, Smbat the Constable; but not Vardan.

<sup>25</sup> Samuel of Ani, *Hawakmunk’i groc’ patmagrac’* (Ejmiacin, 1893), 120; trans. in M. Brosset, “Samouel d’Ani: Tables chronologiques,” in *Collection des historiens arméniens*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1876). The later Kirakos quotes this passage, changing “son of Satan” to “son of Belial.” Kirakos Ganjakec’i, *Patmut’iwn Hayoc’* (Erevan, 1961), 107; trans. in M. Brosset, “Histoire de l’Arménie par le vartabed Kiracos de Gantzac,” in *Deux historiens arméniens* (St. Petersburg, 1870), 1–194.

<sup>26</sup> *Pseudo Epiphanius Sermo de Antichristo*, ed. G. Frasson, Bibliotheca Armeniaca 2 (Venice, 1976).

<sup>27</sup> The prophecy of Nersēs I has been discussed above. The prophecy of Sahak, predicting the restoration of a king in the Arsacid line and a patriarch descended from St. Gregory, appears in the *History of Lazar P’arpec’i, Patmut’iwn Hayoc’* (Tiflis, 1904; repr. Delmar, N.Y., 1985), 29–37; trans. in R. W. Thomson, *The History of Lazar P’arpec’i* (Atlanta, 1991). A Greek version also exists: G. Garitte, “La vision de S. Sahak en grec,” *Le Muséon* 71 (1958): 255–78. Sahak’s vision is also discussed in A. Hovannisyan, *Drvagner hay azatagrakan mtk’i patmut’yan*, vol. 1 (Erevan, 1957), which was not available to me.

<sup>28</sup> Pseudo-Epiphanius, 5.226. Note the summons, which is not the version in the Armenian Agat’angelos (known as Aa; see Garitte, *Agathange*, 1–4).

in the so-called Letter of Concord, which purports to be the actual text of the pact signed by Constantine and Trdat in Rome. This *Letter* exists in various recensions and has not yet received a proper edition. It is a strongly pro-Western document, probably a translation of a French original, representative of the extreme pro-Roman party in Cilician Armenia.

The printed versions of the *Letter of Concord*, which is some thirty pages long, have considerable variations of detail. The Venice edition of 1695 bears the confident title: “Letter of Friendship and Unity of the great emperor Constantine and saint Silvester the supreme Pope, and Trdat king of Armenia and saint Gregory the Illuminator, composed in the year of the Lord 316.”<sup>29</sup> Three points are significant for our immediate purpose: Silvester ordains Gregory and makes him patriarch of all Armenians, wherever they may be.<sup>30</sup> Constantine grants Bethlehem to “my dear brother” Trdat.<sup>31</sup> And Constantine refers to future misfortunes befalling Armenia. However, “salvation will come from the Lord and help from our own progeny,” says the emperor, foretelling the rise of a new Constantine.<sup>32</sup> These ideas are developed by some of the thirteenth-century Armenian historians.

The diversion of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople at the beginning of that century did not have many immediate echoes in Armenia. The scribe Gregory at the patriarchal see of Hromkla, copying in 1204 the Commentary on Luke by Ignatios *vardapet*, noted that King Leo had heard of the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders by special messenger from Baldwin. Gregory states: “At first we were saddened; then we remembered the prophecy of saint Nersēs, and we await the liberation of Jerusalem and all this land.” He wisely added: “But God will take care of the future.”<sup>33</sup> Although it is another half century before Armenian historians echo such hopes for the liberation of Jerusalem, prophetic expectations were clearly in circulation, as we hear from a non-Armenian source.

Friar William of Rubruck spent the years 1253–55 in a lengthy voyage to the Mongol khan. In his report to King Louis IX, he notes that on his return journey he stopped at Nakhchawan on the Araxes, where an Armenian bishop told him that: “[The Armenians] have two prophets. The first is the martyr Methodius, who . . . made a full-blown prophecy about the Ishmaelites, which has come to fruition in the Saracens. The name of the other prophet is Acacron. When dying he uttered a prophecy about a race of archers who would come from the north, saying that they would conquer the whole of the East. . . . They will occupy the countries from the north down to the south and advance as far as Constantinople.” To summarize: the Franks in Jerusalem will fall upon the Tartars with the aid of the Armenians, and occupy Tabriz. All the peoples of the East

<sup>29</sup> Translated from the Armenian title page of *Lettera dell'Amicitia e dell'Unione* (Venice, 1695). Another version in K. V. Šahnazareanc', *Dašanc' T'ht'oc' k'mmut' iun u herk'umē* (Paris, 1862), 11–30; partial version in C. Galanus, *Conciliatio ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana*, Pars I (Rome, 1690), 31–35.

<sup>30</sup> There was an earlier tradition in the Syriac and Karshuni versions of Agathangelos that Gregory was ordained in Rome, but by Leontius (the bishop of Caesarea in Aa). See M. van Esbroeck, “Le résumé syriaque de l'Agathange,” *AB* 95 (1977): 291–358, esp. 344. For the Karshuni version derived from the Syriac, see M. van Esbroeck, “Un nouveau témoin du livre d'Agathange,” *REArm* 8 (1971): 13–167.

<sup>31</sup> *Letter*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> *Letter*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Yovsep'ean, col. 697; the MS is now Jerusalem no. 334.

and the unbelievers will be converted, and such peace will reign in the world that the living will say to the dead: “Alas for you, who have not lived to see these times.” William of Rubruck says that he had first heard this prophecy in Constantinople from Armenians who lived there, and that throughout Armenia it is credited with the same reliability as the Gospel. The Armenian bishop also told him: “Just as the souls in Limbo were waiting for the coming of Christ so as to be set free, so are we waiting for your coming in order to be delivered from this slavery we have been in for so long.”<sup>34</sup>

Methodius is not named by Armenian writers until the very end of the thirteenth century, when Step‘annos of Siunik‘ quotes a lengthy passage from the Apocalypse attributed to him.<sup>35</sup> Acacron, however, is known in Armenian as Agadron or Agat‘on. His prophecy has its origin in the well-known prediction of St. Nersēs, with wild elaborations of the Mongol period, and echoes themes found in the *Letter of Concord*. It too refers to the coming of Constantine and Trdat to Jerusalem: we learn that Constantine built the church of the Holy Sepulcher, and Trdat that of the Nativity in Bethlehem. At a later time a new Constantine, with an army that includes troops descended from the Armenians who escorted Trdat to Rome, will liberate the Christians from the bondage of the Archers, that is, the Mongols. Later events leading up to the reign of Anti-Christ and the Second Coming follow the pattern of the treatise of Pseudo-Epiphanius.<sup>36</sup> Such ideas, however, were slow to be integrated into the mainstream of Armenian historiography, as a brief look at historians writing after William of Rubruck will show.

The *History of Vanakan vardapet* is unfortunately lost. This went down to 1265 and dealt in particular with the Mongol invasions. Much of its information was probably incorporated into the works of his pupils Kirakos of Gandzak and Vardan, but they do not specify what is his and what is their own. A brief anti-Greek tract attributed to Vanakan refers to the story of Gregory’s visit to Rome. The only new detail not found in the *Letter of Concord* is that when the two kings divided the holy places, Trdat received St. James, the Armenian cathedral, and Golgotha, but that they threw lots for the Anastasis. Constantine lost, but St. Gregory allowed the Romans to have it in order to expand the building.<sup>37</sup>

Kirakos in his own *History* picks up the theme of Nersēs’ prophecy. He repeats the claim that Nersēs had foreseen the ruin of Armenia at the hands of the Archers, “which we have now seen with our own eyes,” says Kirakos, referring to the Mongols.<sup>38</sup> These disasters are harbingers of Anti-Christ. But Kirakos makes no link with the Crusaders, whose activities he mentions only sporadically.

According to him, these Romans had come via Thrace to Asia Minor in order to

<sup>34</sup> Quoted from the translation by P. Jackson and D. Morgan, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, Hakluyt Society (London, 1990), 265–67.

<sup>35</sup> See below.

<sup>36</sup> See the summary in A. K. Sanjian, “Two Contemporary Armenian Elegies on the Fall of Constantinople, 1453,” *Viator* 1 (1970): 223–61, esp. 232–34. The Armenian text published by B. Sargisean in *Bazmavēp* (Venice, 1913) was unavailable to me; he gives extracts and a lengthy discussion of the text in his *Usummasirut ‘iwnk‘ hin ktakarani anvaver groc‘ vray* (Venice, 1898), 177–207.

<sup>37</sup> Vanakan, *Ban Hawatali*, text in M. Mut‘afean, “Ban Hawatali erki hefinaki xndirē,” *Solakat‘* (Istanbul, 1995): 156–64.

<sup>38</sup> Kirakos Ganjakec‘i, 231.

avenge the afflictions brought on the Christians by the Scythians (Turks) and Persians. On their way they had been much vexed by the son of Belial called Alexios. But those who survived his deceit captured Antioch and Jerusalem; this he dates to 1097.<sup>39</sup> Reaching the year 1139, he notes that the Catholicos Gregory III went to Jerusalem in order to worship at the holy places. He says nothing about the Council of Jerusalem held in 1141,<sup>40</sup> but reports that, while there, the Catholicos Gregory and the Franks renewed the old compact of Trdat and Gregory with Constantine and Silvester.

As noted earlier, this famous encounter in Rome is a perennial feature of Armenian tradition and was cited frequently from the fifth century onwards in various contexts. Unlike his teacher Vanakan, Kirakos does not say that the two kings actually went to Jerusalem, but rather that Constantine and Silvester gave the Armenians relics of the apostles and also rights in Jerusalem: not only the church of St. James and Golgotha, but also a place for the liturgy in the Anastasis. Gregory was allowed to hang a lamp over the tomb, and he prayed that on the feast of Easter this lamp would be lit without visible light.<sup>41</sup>

This is not the first mention of the miraculous Fire on Holy Saturday in Armenian sources, for disputes about the correct date for that feast date from the divergence of the calendars in the seventh century.<sup>42</sup> The importance of Kirakos' claim is that after Jerusalem had been recaptured by the Muslims, Armenians were basing their claims to the holy places on rights bestowed by the builder of those churches. More surprising is his acknowledgment of the title of patriarch coming from Rome. This runs contrary to earlier Armenian theories of patriarchal autonomy and sits uneasily with the general attitude of writers in Greater Armenia toward the pope. However, Kirakos does not make any connection between the new Romans—that is, the Crusaders—and the old Romans of the time of Constantine. Nor does he tie the Mongols, harbingers of Anti-Christ, to any hope of deliverance from the West.

Explaining the origin of the Crusades, his fellow pupil Vardan also notes that the prophecy of St. Nersēs had been fulfilled, though he does not indicate what the prophecy had actually predicted. However, the immediate cause of the first Crusade, asserts Vardan, was the affair of the French count's eye. "While the Scythians were ruling over Jerusalem and levying fees on those who visited the holy tomb, a certain count, Frank by race, happened to be jostled in the throng and became angered. For that reason he was beaten, until one of his eyes was knocked from its socket and fell out. Picking it up, he placed it in his wallet and took it to Rome, where he showed it. He made many burn with rancor. So their most noble men, leaders of numerous troops, came forth, whose names were as follows." Vardan then gives the names of several leading Crusaders, which he has taken from the *History* of Matthew.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Kirakos, 106.

<sup>40</sup> Kirakos, 117. For the council see the description in Halfter, *Das Papsttum*, 127–29.

<sup>41</sup> Kirakos, 11.

<sup>42</sup> See A. K. Sanjian, "Cřazatik 'Erroneous Easter'—A Source of Greco-Armenian Religious Controversy," *Studia Caucasica* 2 (1966): 26–47.

<sup>43</sup> Vardan Arewelc'i, *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean* (Venice, 1862; repr. Delmar, N.Y., 1991), 110; trans. in R. W. Thomson, "The Historical Compilation of Vardan Arewelc'i," *DOP* 43 (1989): 125–226. Cf. Matthew, 308.

The story of the count's eye is also found in the Armenian version of the Syrian patriarch Michael's *Chronicle*, where the count is identified as St. Gille. Michael's famous work in twenty-one books, composed soon before his death in 1199, was rendered into Armenian by a Syrian named Iṣox with the help of Vardan himself. As with the Armenian version of the Georgian Chronicles made anonymously about the same time, Vardan and Iṣox not only greatly abbreviated the original, but also made various additions of their own. Michael himself, in the original Syriac, does not mention Raymond of St. Gille's eye; nor does this story appear in the works of Bar Hebraeus. It seems to be of Armenian origin. On the other hand, in their Armenian version of Michael, Iṣox and Vardan did not add any reference to the well-known prophecy of Nersēs.<sup>44</sup>

One might also note in passing a further Armenian addition to the original Syriac of Michael's *Chronicle* regarding the Crusades: Edessa was captured by the Crusaders before Jerusalem because King Abgar had believed in Christ before Jerusalem did. This reflects the old Armenian tradition that Abgar was himself an Armenian, his entourage were members of Armenian noble families, and thus Armenian faith in Jesus Christ predates that of other churches.<sup>45</sup>

As one might expect, the *Chronicle* of Smbat, brother of king Het'um, is well informed about the Crusades. He notes that fuller details about these princes of the Romans may be found in the Frankish historians.<sup>46</sup> Smbat's own close involvement with the West is reflected in his adaptation of the earlier Armenian law code of Mxit'ar Goš to incorporate westernizing practices in Cilicia.<sup>47</sup> But Smbat offers no reflections on the significance of the Crusades, either in terms of the Armenian past or with expectations of the future. His chronicle was completed soon after 1272,<sup>48</sup> by which time the Crusaders had been reduced to a fraction of their earlier significance. He does include one passing reference to the prophecy of Nersēs, but that concerns the fall of Ani to the Byzantines back in 1044.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Armenian text of Michael, *Žamanakagrut'ium* (Jerusalem, 1871), 402; trans. (from a different Armenian recension) in V. Langlois, *Chronique de Michel le grand* (Venice, 1868). Although Vardan had named St. Gilles among the crusading princes, it is only in the Armenian version of Michael that he is associated with the count who lost his eye. For the complicated textual history of the Armenian text, see A. B. Schmitt, "Die zweifache armenische Rezension der syrischen Chronik Michaels des Grossen," *Le Muséon* 109 (1996): 299–319; and for adaptations introduced by the translators Vardan and Iṣox, F. Haase, "Die armenische Rezension der syrischen Chronik Michaels des Grossen," *OC*, n.s., 5 (1915): 60–82, 271–84. For similar alterations in the Armenian version of the Georgian Chronicles, see R. W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History: The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles*, Oxford Oriental Monographs (Oxford, 1996), xlv–l.

<sup>45</sup> Michael, *Žamanakagrut'ium*, 404. The first historian to think of Abgar as Armenian was Movsēs Xorenac'i. See his *History*, book 2.26–33, for the adaptation of the earlier legend concerning the conversion of Edessa.

<sup>46</sup> Smbat Sparapet, *Taregirk'* (Venice, 1956), 100, under the year 545 (= 1096 A.D.). For the different recensions of this *Chronicle*, see S. Der Nersessian, "The Armenian Chronicle of the Constable Smpad or of the 'Royal Historian,'" *DOP* 13 (1959): 143–68, reprinted in her *Etudes byzantines et arméniennes*, vol. 1 (Louvain, 1973), 352–77. The translation by G. Dédéyan, *La chronique attribuée au connétable Smbat*, Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres 13 (Paris, 1980), begins at p. 179 of the Armenian text under the year 608 (= 1159 A.D.).

<sup>47</sup> Armenian text, translation, and commentary in J. Karst, *Sempadscher Kodex aus dem 13. Jahrhundert oder Mitlarmenisches Rechtsbuch* (Strassburg, 1905), 2 vols.

<sup>48</sup> That is the date of the last entry; Smbat died in 1276.

<sup>49</sup> Smbat, *Taregirk'*, 42.

Nor does Mxit'ar Ayrivanec'i, whose *Chronicle* reaches the year 1289, pay much attention to the Crusaders. They came to "help the Christians"; but Mxit'ar has no reference to the prophecy of Nersēs or to any connection between these new Romans and the old pact with Constantine.<sup>50</sup>

The last major historical work to be considered is that composed in 1299 by Step'annos, metropolitan of the large province of Siunik' in northeastern Armenia. His *History* is a history of his own province; he does not concern himself with the fate of Armenians elsewhere. When, for example, he mentions in passing the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187, the important feature of the ensuing massacres was the martyrdom of a bishop from Siunik' who happened to be visiting the Holy Sepulcher.<sup>51</sup> Step'annos was obviously not very well informed about events that far from his episcopal see, for he calls Saladin a "Khorazmian"—though perhaps he just means "Turk." And when Akka fell in 1291, Step'annos confuses the name with Achaia in Greece, since he refers to it as "the populous city of the Corinthians."<sup>52</sup>

Step'annos condemns the catholicos, then Grigor VII, for following the Greek calendar when celebrating Easter in 1293. He devotes many more lines to this dispute over the Holy Fire on Holy Saturday than to the fall of Hřomkla to the Mamluks the previous year.<sup>53</sup> In any event, Step'annos has no interest in mentioning the arrival of the Crusaders or in describing their final collapse; nor does he link their presence to any Armenian traditions. And when he engages in theological disputation, either on matters of liturgical practice or the decisions of councils, it is the Greek church that is condemned. The Franks and the West are ignored.

Step'annos does not bring up the famous prediction of Nersēs, except to note that it was fulfilled back in the fourth century when Armenia was divided. But for the first time we find in Armenian a long quotation from the Pseudo-Methodian *Apocalypse*.<sup>54</sup> This comes immediately after a description of the life and work of his eighth-century predecessor, Step'annos, bishop of Siunik', who is famous for his translations of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus and other Greek texts. It is not clear whether the earlier Step'annos was supposedly responsible only for the long extract quoted or for the whole of the *Apocalypse*. In any event, the extract cited by the second Step'annos comes from the Greek version of Methodius, not the original Syriac. Which Step'annos is responsible for additions that bring in Armenia is also unclear.

Be that as it may, this long quotation is not integrated into Step'annos Orbelean's own *History*, being a kind of appendix to the chapter on the earlier Step'annos. It refers to the Romans overcoming the Ishmaelites and bringing peace to east and west. But then Gog

<sup>50</sup> Mxit'ar Ayrivanec'i, *Patmut' iwn Hayoc'* (Moscow, 1860), 59, under the year 1094; trans. in M. Brosset, "Histoire chronologique par Mkhithar d'Airivank, XIII S," *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St. Petersbourg*, ser. 7, vol. 13.5 (1869). Mxit'ar is familiar with the pact, as known to Kirakos, and he adds the figure of 70,000 escort (as in Aa 873) under the year 287.

<sup>51</sup> Step'annos Orbelean, *Patmut' iwn nahangin Sisakan* (Moscow, 1861), 252; trans. in M. Brosset, *Histoire de la Siounie par Stéphanos Orbélian* (St. Petersburg, 1864).

<sup>52</sup> Step'annos, 245.

<sup>53</sup> Step'annos, 248–49.

<sup>54</sup> Step'annos, 89–94.

and Magog, releasing all the wild peoples who had been confined to the north by Alexander the Great, will devastate the world and the son of perdition will appear. This will be followed by the Second Coming of Christ, the extermination of the impious, and the ascension of the just to heaven like luminous stars. However, Step'annos does not in any way make the prophecies relevant to later events, either to the Crusades or to the Mongol invasions.

Such apocalyptic ideas and hopes for help from the West—always disappointed but tenacious nonetheless—persisted long after the time of the Crusades. The fall of Constantinople in 1453, for example, was commemorated in various elegies, a genre with a long history in Armenian literature. Aġak'el of Bitlis drew on the traditions just described: he looks forward to the recovery of “Stamboul” by the Franks, who will then go on to Jerusalem and drive out the infidels. The victorious Franks will be guided to Armenia by descendants of those Armenian soldiers who stayed behind in Rome on the occasion of Trdat's visit. Thus will Armenia be liberated.<sup>55</sup> And those hoping for Western intervention in later centuries, even down to modern times, echo similar aspirations.<sup>56</sup>

To return to the Crusaders. Their immediate impact in Cilicia was of course all-embracing; Western traditions deeply influenced Armenian social life, religious practice, legal codes, linguistic idiom, and artistic achievement. Little of this is reflected in Armenian historiography of the time. Those Armenians who were writing outside Cilicia do not concern themselves much with events there. Even when they do discuss westernizing habits, it is generally to condemn them. As in the past, Armenian authors did not offer a perspective that embraced all Armenian viewpoints. There was never any one “Armenian attitude” to the Crusades, any more than there had been one attitude toward Byzantium or toward the other major powers of the Near East.

What is noticeable, however, is the attempt by some Armenian historians to integrate the Crusades into the broader progression of Armenian history. Traditions from the earliest authors of the fifth century—when Armenians first began to reflect on their past—were picked up, elaborated, and brought into connection with contemporary events. The Franks were not only seen in terms of past Armenian prophecy but were also integrated into predictions for the future derived from foreign sources.

The Crusaders had not liberated Armenia from the Turks or from the Mongols. But because of their Western origins they could be associated with that most ancient of Armenian aspirations: the return of the golden age, namely, the reign of a new Trdat from the Arsacid family and a new Gregory from the line of the holy Illuminator. The Latinophiles might emphasize the role of Pope Silvester. Most Armenians, however, hoped for renewed military success in a descendant of the first Christian emperor of Rome, Constantine, who so long before had entered into an eternal alliance with the first Christian king of their own country.

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<sup>55</sup> See Sanjian, “Two Contemporary Armenian Elegies.”

<sup>56</sup> See the discussion for the 16th–19th centuries in N. G. Garsoġan, “Reality and Myth in Armenian History,” in *The East and the Meaning of History*, Università di Roma “La Sapienza,” *Studi Orientali* 13 (1994), 117–45.