

Cilicia

Cilicia is a historical and geographical region (present-day Turkey), which now covers the territories of the Turkish regions Alania, Mersin, Tarsus, Adana, Kahramanmaras, Iskenderun, etc.

In various publications, along with definitions of ‘Armenian Cilician State,’ ‘tsardom,’ or ‘kingdom,’ we often come across the term ‘Greater Armenia.’ However, do these terms correspond to historical truth?

Armenians have never had their statehood, and the area of their residence as a province in different historical periods has been part of the Achaemenid Empire (the first Persian Empire), the Parthian Kingdom, the Roman Empire, the Sasanian Kingdom (the second Persian Empire), the Arab Caliphate, and the Byzantine Empire. Starting from 1048, and up to 1828, Armenians were part of various Turkic states, and then part of the Russian Empire.

The term ‘Armenia’ (Armina) is first found around 521 BC in the Behistun inscription cut by the order of Persian (Achaemenid) King Darius I to designate the Persian satrapy (military-administrative district or province on the territory of the former Kingdom of Urartu).

The later Greek sources mention two satrapies with this name: Western Armenia and Eastern Armenia. The territory of the latter was ruled hereditarily by the Orontid Dynasty (Armenians call Yervanduni or Yervandids) with ancient Persian roots.

‘Greater Armenia’ is not mentioned in Greco-Roman sources. The maps of the time specify ‘Armenia Major’ and ‘Armenia Minor’, i.e. Big Armenia and Little Armenia. There were also ‘Western Armenia’ and ‘Eastern Armenia.’ Some part of this area was called Mesopotamia (the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates). This geography also comprised historical regions called Pontus, Sophene, Kolkis, Atropatena, Cilicia, Pamphylia, Cappadocia, Lydia, Caria, Phrygia, and Galatia. Then almost all these territories in the aggregate were called Anatolia. Only Kolkis is now Colchis, Georgia, and Atropatena is the entire Iranian Azerbaijan and the south-eastern regions of the present-day Republic of Azerbaijan. Until 1048 the name ‘Armenia’ had a geographical and territorial significance, then it also disappeared.

According to Wikipedia, the Cilician Armenian State - an Armenian feudal principality, and then a kingdom, existed in Cilicia from 1080 to 1375, and in mountainous Cilicia until 1424.

Let's make a little journey. The history of Byzantium begins in 330 AD. In the same year, Emperor Constantine I moved the capital of the state and called it

'New Rome.' Later the city was named Constantinople. The city arose on the site of the Greek colony Byzantium. The Romans pronounced this term as "Byzantia", hence the name of the new Roman State appeared. The Romans themselves did not officially use it.

In 392, the Emperor issued a decree forbidding pagan cults. Since then, Christianity has become widespread. Earlier, in 227, the Parthian Kingdom ceased to exist, and the Sasanian State emerged instead. The state religion of the Parthians and Sassanids was Zoroastrianism of the first Persian Achaemenid Empire. Before the advent of the Arabs, the region witnessed a bitter confrontation between Christianity and Zoroastrianism. At the heart of Zarathustra's doctrine, there was the free moral choice of good thoughts, words, and deeds by a human. In antiquity and the early Middle Ages, Zoroastrianism was spread mainly in the territory of 'Greater Iran' or 'Iran,' i.e. Persian states. 'Greater Iran' or simply 'Iran' covered the territories of present-day Iran, the Republics of Transcaucasia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey.

By 661, the Arabs had established their rule over most of the Transcaucasus. The Arabs united all local territories under the common 'al-Arminiyya.' However, despite the name, 'al-Arminiyya' included the territories of present-day Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

By the beginning of the 11th century, the territory of al-Arminiyya hosted Armenian feudal possessions. The first Armenian sources called them knyazes and then 'kings,' and asserted the alleged existence of 'Armenian States' and 'Armenian Kings.' Then Armenians went to even greater extremes in their fictions, and the 'State of Greater Armenia,' the 'Cilician Armenian State,' the 'Kingdom of Ani,' the 'Kingdom of Syunik,' etc. appeared out of nowhere.

In fact, all these 'kings' were vassals of the states Armenian feudal lords served. These 'kings' were leaders of their clans who owned certain territories. Depending on the overlord, their land holdings increased or decreased. Suzerains were appointed governors from among those feudal lords. Some of them became governors of large regions, called by Armenian historians 'king of kings.'

E.g., the caliph appointed some feudal lord the ruler of 'al-Arminiyya' under the title 'batrik al batarika,' which meant 'knyaz of knyazes.' The knyaz, as known, headed a clan, not a state.

The province of al-Arminiyya existed from 701 to 884. By the beginning of the 11th century, the Arab Caliphate had fallen into decay, and the confrontation between the Byzantines and the Seljuk Turks began. Byzantium virtually captured the province of al-Arminiyya. During this period, some Armenian feudal lords began to resettle their tribes in Cilicia and Cappadocia. E.g., the Artsruni clan

settled in Sebastia (now Sivas, Turkey), and the Ani feudal lord Gagik settled in Caesarea (now Kayseri, Turkey). There were others as well.

At the same time, Christian pilgrims who returned from Jerusalem spoke of the fabulously rich East, and the Roman Catholic Church sought to extend its influence on the eastern Mediterranean. As a result, in November 1095, at the Clermont Cathedral (Clermont, France), Pope Urban II called on all kings, lords, knights, and ordinary people to take the cross to the Holy Land. The first one was called the 'Crusade of the Poor' since most crusaders were land-poor and landless knights.

The inheritance order that existed in Western Europe, majorat (the right of seniority), when the land passed from father to eldest son, forced the younger ones to seek funds for a life appropriate to their class, and they found a way out in participation in wars. Therefore, in that period, a huge number of knights emerged in Europe, united in gangs, who were engaged in robbery and rent-seeking in villages. Many of them craved wealth and fame. More than half of the 80-thousand army consisted of robbers.

The Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos understood that this crowd was not an army but a rabble that could not resist the Seljuks. He did not want these people to cross the Bosphorus, but when he saw them engaged in robbery and looting, he decided to put them across to the eastern shore of the Bosphorus, away from Constantinople.

As a result, thanks to the ships provided by the Byzantine Emperor, about 30 thousand people ended up in Asia. However, the path of the army was short and inglorious. The crusaders were defeated by the Turks before reaching the capital of the Seljuks, Nicaea (the city of Iznik in the province of Bursa, Turkey). Only about a thousand people were saved.

In 1071, Byzantium was defeated by the Seljuks at Manzikert (now Malazgirt, Turkey). Then Byzantium gave its ground, as a result of which several independent Armenian principalities were formed. The 'Kingdom of Philaretos Varajnuni' was one of them, which stretched along the Euphrates in Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean Sea, including Cilicia.

Earlier, the Byzantine army under the command of the future contender for the crown Nicephorus Melissinus and the brother of the future Emperor Alexios Manuel Komnenos was defeated by the Seljuks near Sebastia (now the city of Sivas, Turkey). The Armenian population reacted indifferently to those events. A year later, during a campaign against the Seljuks, Emperor Romanos Diogenes arrived in Sebastia, and the city was plundered and burned by his order. An attempt by feudal lord Gagik II Bagratuni to reconcile the warring parties was unsuccessful. The events in Sebastia marked a break in relations between the

Armenian knyazes of Asia Minor and Byzantium since territorial changes occurred that were not beneficial to the Armenian feudal lords.

The feudal lords of the Bagratuni clan were the knyazes of Ani (a medieval city located in the province of Kars, Turkey). In 1045, the Byzantines abolished the Principality of Ani, and the last Knyaz of Ani Gagik II received the Kharsian Thema (military-administrative district) in Central Anatolia.

The army of Romanos IV Diogenes was commanded by Armenian and Byzantine Colonel Philaretos Brachamios or Pilartos Varajnuni. In 1069, Philaretos assumed command of the main Byzantine Army, which defended the borders of Mesopotamia. Romanos was defeated (Armenian troops left the battlefield) by the Seljuk Turks in the Battle of Manzikert (now the city of Malazgirt in the province of Mush, Turkey) on August 19, 1071. The commander of the division, Varajnuni fled to Mesopotamia with a large military group.

Sultan of the Seljuk State Alp-Arslan (1063-1072) did not pursue the goal of destroying Byzantium. Alp-Arslan was content with changing the border and Byzantium's promise to conclude an alliance, and then released Romanos from captivity. Under the Turks, Armenian fiefs were also preserved intact. The Seljuks brought peace, tranquility, and justice.

Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078) then seized the Byzantine throne and sent an army against his stepfather Romanos. After several battles, Romanos hid in the Fortress of Tiropey southwest of Caesarea (now the city of Kayseri, Turkey). Khachatur, appointed by him Catepan (highest military and civil official) of Antioch in 1069, came to his aid. Romanos remained in the fortress while putting his army under the command of Khachatur. At the first armed clash, Khachatur fled from the battlefield, his army was defeated, and Romanos Diogenes was captured again, blinded, and died of wounds. By the summer of 1072, the Byzantine army had virtually ceased to exist, and not an external enemy but internal conflicts dealt the final blow to it. At that time, Armenian feudal lords took advantage of the situation and created several principalities.

Varajnuni, as the only Byzantine commander remaining in the southeast, assumed the title of 'Emperor' and established a quasi-autonomous kingdom from Cilicia to Edessa. In 1078, Emperor Nikephoros III appointed him Duke of Antioch (now Hatay, Turkey), which included Edessa. The Seljuk Turks captured Antioch and Edessa in, respectively, 1084 and 1086. Varajnuni hid in the Fortress of Germanikeia (now the city of Kahramanmaraş, Turkey), where he died in 1087. Later, his sons handed the Fortress of Germanikeia over to the Colonels of the First Crusade in 1098.

Under Varajnuni, feudal lord Ruben I (cousin of Gagik II) received Mountainous Cilicia in his possession, and feudal lord Toros became the ruler of

Melitene (now Malatya, Turkey), and then Edessa (now Sanliurfa, Turkey). The Byzantine emperor Michael VII conferred the title of master (chief, head) of Tarsus (now the city of Tarsus in the province of Mersin, Turkey) to the family of feudal lord Abelgarib Artsruni. Together with his friend and husband of his daughter Oshin, he recaptured the Lambron Fortress (now the city of Camliyayla, Mersin province, Turkey) from the Arabs, and Oshin became the Knyaz of Lambron.

However, the crusaders soon destroyed the Armenian principalities in northern Syria. And Knyazes Ruben and Oshin help them with armed detachments and food. In Cilicia, Armenian knyazes started fighting among themselves, and Armenian Knyaz Constantine won due to an alliance with the crusaders. During the First Crusade, the 'Armenian Principality of Cilicia' emerged thanks to the crusaders. It was not a kingdom. It was a principality of the crusaders. Constantine married a Greek woman from a noble Byzantine family Fok. The son of Toros I married a representative of the Byzantine Mandal clan. Constantine's daughter married Joscelin, Knyaz of Galilee (now Israel, founded by the crusaders), Count of Edessa, and the daughter of his brother Toros married Baldwin, brother of the crusader leader Godfrey. Constantine received the title of Count.

Toros asks for protection from crusader Baldwin of Boulogne, and the latter captures Edessa with 80 crusaders. Toros adopts him and gives his daughter in marriage to him with 60,000 bezants as a dowry. This was the name of the Roman gold coin solidus (4.55 g of gold) among Western Europeans. It was a politically convenient marriage since Baldwin I became the first Count of Edessa, a crusader principality. The Rubinyans paid 273 kg of gold as a dowry. Baldwin I became the legal heir to Toros and began to receive half of the city's income. Thus, the crusaders took the Armenian Rubinyan clan under their protection.

In 1105, Baldwin I 'annulled the marriage' due to Arda's 'free lifestyle', presumably because she had been raped by pirates on her way to Jerusalem. Formally, the marriage was not dissolved. Thus, Baldwin married Adelaide of Savona while having a legal wife Arda. Patriarch Arnulf of Jerusalem, who performed the marriage ceremony, was deprived of his position for simony, but then returned to the cathedra by the Pope provided that the illegal marriage is annulled.

The marriage of Baldwin I with Armenian Arda was not successful: enraged by the free lifestyle of his wife, the King insisted on her exile to one of the Jerusalem monasteries and then allowed her to leave for Constantinople.

Baldwin I - Count of Edessa in 1098-1100, was the first King of Jerusalem in 1100-1118. He died during a campaign in Egypt in April 1118. Around 1101, Baldwin II married Morphia and received a rich dowry of 50,000 gold bezants from the ruler of Melitene Gabriel. However, kinship with the crusaders did not

save the Armenian knyaz. In 1103, as a result of the offensive of the Seljuks, Melitena fell.

In 1118, Baldwin II inherited the crown of Jerusalem, but Morphia remained in Edessa with her four daughters. In 1119, after the defeat of the Christians in the Battle of the Field of Blood (Balat, Aleppo region, Syria), he went north to secure his borders, and then in 1120, took his family to Jerusalem, where Morphia was crowned. In 1123, Baldwin II was captured by the Muslims (released in 1124), and Morphia returned to Edessa.

From 1131 to 1161, his daughter from Morphia of Melitene, Melisende was factually the Queen of Jerusalem. Then her sons became its kings. Her grandson was the famous King of Jerusalem Baldwin IV, who fell ill with leprosy early and suffered from this disease throughout his short life. He died at 24 when fought with Salahaddin, saving Jerusalem. In 2005, the film Kingdom of Heaven was released, depicting the young King as a courageous and peaceful ruler, but the severity of his illness was downplayed. At that time, he was already blind and virtually could not walk.

In 1137, Byzantium captured plain Cilicia, and the captive Toros was sent to Constantinople. Having escaped in 1151, he married lord Raban's daughter, allying with the Latins. Toros II from the Rubinyan clan took plain Cilicia back.

The Armenians skillfully used family, marriage, and religious ties in their political games.

Thus, Levon I (1150-1219), who ruled Cilicia in 1187-1219, actively participated in the Third Crusade led by Frederick I Barbarossa and his contemporary Salahaddin. His daughter Zabel (Isabella Rubinyan or Isabel, 1216-1252) married Philip of Antioch, the Knyaz of Antioch (now the city of Antakya, Turkey). Hitherto, the Cilician and Antioch principalities were at war.

Friedrich I of Hohenstaufen (1122-1190) had been the King of Germany since 1152, Emperor of the Roman Empire since 1155, and Duke of Swabia in 1147-1152 under the name Frederick III.

Frederick I drowned in the Selif River (Geksu, Turkey) in Cilicia during the Third Crusade. His guides were Armenians.

(In his novel Baudolino (2000), Italian scholar and writer Umberto Eco (1932-2016) puts forward his version of the death of Frederick I. Before his death, the Emperor spent the night in the castle of Armenian feudal lord Makhitar Ardzuni on the banks of the Selif River and died, suffocated by the smolder of a burning oil Ardzruni poured firewood in the hearth to make them burn better. When found the lifeless body of Frederick I, his guards, including Baudolino,

realized that the Emperor's son would execute them and came up with a scam, as a result of which everyone decided that the Emperor had drowned while swimming.

The Emperor of Germany, the Kings of France and England, and the Duke of Austria took part in the Third Crusade. The army of Frederick I was considered the most battle-ready. Salahaddin knew his strength. After the Emperor's unexpected death, most of the Germans abandoned the Crusade and returned to Europe.

The son of the German Emperor Frederick of Swabia went with Armenians to Tarsus (now Tarsus, Turkey) and arrived in Akko (now Acre, Israel) only in early October 1190. After his death from malaria on January 20, 1191, the last German crusaders left the Holy Land.

Antioch was the second Christian principality after Cilicia, founded by the crusaders during the First Crusade in the territory of present-day Syria and Turkey. In 1219, the Knyaz of Cilicia Levon died, and in 1222, his daughter Zabel married Philip of Antioch, who became the Knyaz of Cilicia. Three years later, he was dethroned, imprisoned, and after another two years, poisoned. Then Isabel married Hethum, the son of the Catholicos of Cilicia. The Hethumid Dynasty emerged.

Rita II of Armenia (Maria of Constantinople, 1278-1333), the daughter of Knyaz Levon III of Cilicia, was the wife of Emperor Michael IX Palaiologos (1294-1320). Their son Andronicus III Palaiologos was Emperor of Byzantium in 1328-1341. At that time, the allied relations between Armenians and Byzantines resumed.

In 1290, Michael IX was to become the husband of Catherine Courtenay, the heiress of Latin Emperors, who bore the title of Empress of Constantinople, in the hope of mitigating the threat of restoring the Latin power in Byzantium and reconciling with the Latins, the Papacy, and European monarchs. But the marriage failed. For several years, a bride for him was searched for and, ultimately, an embassy delegation was sent to ask for the hand of Rita.

Isabella II Hethumyan or Zabel (1276-1323) was the daughter of Knyaz Levon III and the sister of Knyaz Hethum II and Rita II. During the reign of her brother Hethum II, in 1293, she married the brother of the Cypriot Knyaz Amaury of Tyre to consolidate the alliance. After the suppression of her husband's rebellion in Cyprus, she fled with her four children to her brother.

In 1323, by the order of Knyaz Oshin II who was the regent of the Knyaz of Cilicia, Levon V (Isabella's nephew), Isabella and her eldest son were killed, and the other two sons were exiled to the island of Rhodes. The fourth son, Guy de Lusignan, escaped since he was with his aunt, his mother's sister, the Byzantine Empress Rita in Constantinople. In 1342, the short era of the Lusignan Dynasty begins.

In 1320, the Knyaz of Cilicia Levon IV dies, and the throne passes to the ten-year-old Levon V. Oshin II is elected regent, marries the widow of Knyaz Levon IV, and gives his daughter Alice in marriage to Levon V, who upon reaching the age of majority in 1329, kills Alice, her father, and uncle.

Oshin II was the Knyaz of Korikos, a fortified city. Currently, the fortress is located on the territory of the Turkish city of Kizkalesi in the Erdemli region of the Mersin province.

All this occurred in mountainous Cilicia. At that time, the Byzantines and the crusaders fought for plain Cilicia. Armenians did not like Syrians, clashed with Franks (ancient Germanic tribes), fought with the Muslims, and were most hostile to the Byzantines. Armenians and Franks have always united in the fight against the Byzantines. The Hethumyans supported the Byzantines. The Rubinyans relied on a long-term alliance with the crusaders. In general, depending on the situation, Armenians entered into alliances with the Byzantines, Latins, and Mongols.

The following Armenian principalities existed in Cilicia:

The State of Philaretos Varajuni, stretching from Mesopotamia along the Euphrates and covering Cilicia, Antioch, and part of Syria. It existed from 1071 to 1086. The capital was Marash. Currently, this is the city of Marash, Turkey.

The Principality of Melitene, situated between the Antitaurus and the Euphrates. It existed from 1071 to 1104. The capital was Melitene. Currently, this is the city of Malatya, Turkey.

The Principality of Lambron, a fortress city in Cilicia. It existed from 1073 to 1183. The capital was Lambron. Currently, this is the city of Camliyayla in the province of Mersin, Turkey.

The Rubenid Principality, situated in Cilicia. It existed from 1080 to 1375. The capital was Sis. Currently, this is the city of Kozan in the province of Adana, Turkey.

The Principality of Karkar, a fortress city in Antioch. It existed from 1080 to 1122. The capital was Karkar. Currently, this is the city of Samandag in the province of Hatay, Turkey.

The Principality of Edessa, situated in the interfluvium of the Euphrates. It existed from 1083 to 1098. The capital was Edessa. Currently, this is the city of Sanliurfa, Turkey.

The Principality of Kesun, situated south of Melitene. It existed from 1086 to 1117. The capital was Kesun. Currently, this is the village of Cakirhuyuk in the Besni district of the province of Adiyaman, Turkey.

The Principality of Pyre, a fortress situated in Cilicia. It existed from 1086 to 1100. The capital was Pyre. This fortress was in the territory of the current province of Sanliurfa, Turkey.

The crusades took place in 1096-1270.

In Byzantine times, Armenians were eager for public service. Armenian noble families supplied Byzantium with politicians, officials, and soldiers. There were many Armenians among the Byzantium clergy. The Byzantines supported and trusted Armenians. The Emperors settled Armenian feudal lords with their families in the eastern lands of the Empire to ensure their support during invasions. Armenians settled in Sivas, Kayseri, Mush, Van, Marash, Diyarbakir, Adana, Mersin, Antakya, Hatay, etc.

Throughout history, Armenians have always betrayed their patrons - Sassanids, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, and Russians.

This was a brief historical example from that period, when Armenians holding high positions in Byzantium betrayed the Byzantines. Most of all, Armenians hated the Byzantines, despite the high state and religious positions they held under the Byzantines (the same picture was in the last period of the Ottoman Empire).

The Principality of Cilicia existed from 1080 to 1375. Its territory was about 40 thousand square kilometers. The capitals were the cities of Sis (Kozan, Turkey) and Tarsus (Tarsus, Turkey). The official languages were Latin, Middle Greek, Middle Armenian, and Old French. The population was Armenians, Greeks, Arabs, Jews, Assyrians, and French. The ruling dynasties were the Armenian Rubinids and Hethumids, as well as the French Lusignans.

In those years, the Mongol invasion begins. In 1255, Armenians conclude an alliance with Mongols, which helped to extend the existence of the Cilician Principality. In 1294, the daughter of the Knyaz of Cilicia marries the Emperor of Byzantium. This allowed the Principality to exist for another hundred years.

The Mamluk Sultanate's possessions included Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and part of the territory of North Africa. The Mamluks destroyed the State of the Crusaders and the State of the Ayyubids, defeated the Mongols, and put an end to the existence of the Cilician Principality in 1375. Knyaz of Cilicia Levon V Lusignan was captured and taken to Cairo. Later, in 1377, King Juan I of Castile ransomed Levon V of Lusignan, who first went to Spain, then to France, and died in Paris in 1393.

The Ottoman Empire captured mountainous Cilicia and plain Cilicia in, respectively, 1424 and 1515.

This historical period is very rich in political events of global significance. The Arab Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire were in decline. Crusaders came from the north, and Turks from the east. Fierce battles and wars were waged in the territory of present-day Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Transcaucasia. Armenian feudal clans resettled in mainly Asia Minor, in mountainous, quiet, and safe regions, away from the battlefields, where they continued to exist under the auspices of the Byzantines, then under the protection of the crusaders, Mongols, and again the Byzantines.

On their way to the Holy Land, Red Cross knights had close relations with Armenian feudal lords and entered into marriage unions with them. Armenian feudal lords, in turn, hoped to expand their possessions at the expense of the knights. Armenians were the outpost of Christianity in the East. The regions or territories called 'kingdoms' or 'states' by Armenian and pro-Armenian historians actually belonged to the Byzantines and the crusaders, who used Armenian feudal lords for their political purposes. After the Crusades came to an end, the decline of the Byzantine Empire begins, and therewith, all the small principalities in Asia Minor cease to exist, including the Cilician Christian Principality.