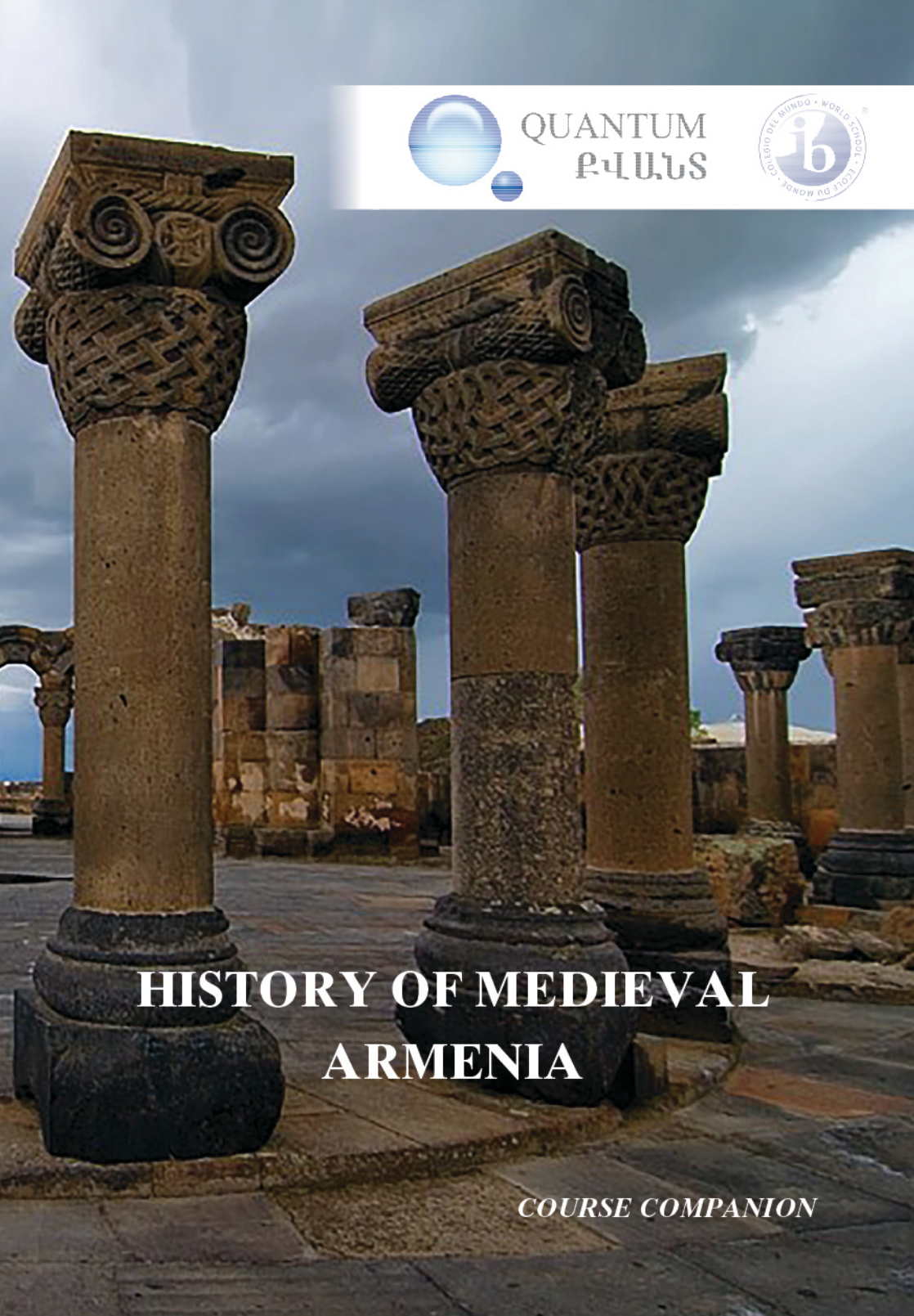

QUANTUM
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HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL ARMENIA

COURSE COMPANION

QUANTUM COLLEGE

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE
DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL ARMENIA

COURSE COMPANION

YEREVAN – 2016

UDC 94 (479.25)

Recommended by the Academic Council of Yerevan State University Faculty of History

Malkhasyan Mikayel, *PhD in History, Yerevan State University*

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The course companion is set for the medieval period of the *History of Armenia* course (Armenian Curriculum) in the IB DP of Quantum College. The course aims to explore the decisive events and essential characteristics of the medieval history of Armenia, providing students with different research perspectives and recent development in the area.

This book can also be helpful for the Armenian studies educational programs for high school and undergraduate students in the Republic of Armenia and the Diaspora.

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Course Companion definition

The IB Diploma Programme Course Companions are resource materials designed to support students throughout their two-year DP course of study in a particular subject. They help students gain an understanding of what is expected from the study of an IB DP subject while presenting content in a way that illustrates the purpose and aims of the IB. They reflect the philosophy and approach of the IB and encourage a deep understanding of each subject by making connections to wider issues and providing opportunities for critical thinking.

The books mirror the IB philosophy of viewing the curriculum in terms of a whole-course approach; the use of a wide range of resources, international mindedness, the IB learner profile and the IB DP core requirements, theory of knowledge, the extended essay, and creativity, action, service (CAS).

Each book can be used in conjunction with other materials and indeed, students of the IB are required to draw conclusions from a variety of resources. Suggestions for additional and further reading are given in each book and suggestions for how to extend research are provided.

In addition, the Course Companions provide advice and guidance on the specific course assessment requirements and on academic honesty protocol. They are distinctive and authoritative without being prescriptive.

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To this end the IB works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

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The IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. IB learners strive to be:

Inquirers: They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.

Knowledgable: They explore concepts, ideas, and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.

Thinkers: They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.

Communicators: They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.

Principled: They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice, and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups, and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.

Open-minded: They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values, and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.

Caring: They show empathy, compassion, and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

Risk-takers: They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas, and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

Balanced: They understand the importance of intellectual, physical, and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.

Reflective: They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

A note on academic honesty

It is of vital importance to acknowledge and appropriately credit the owners of information when that information is used in your work. After all, owners of ideas (intellectual property) have property rights. To have an authentic piece of work, it must be based on your individual and original ideas with the work of others fully acknowledged. Therefore, all assignments, written or oral, completed for assessment must use your own language and expression. Where sources are used or referred to, whether in the form of direct quotation or paraphrase, such sources must be appropriately acknowledged.

How do I acknowledge the work of others?

The way that you acknowledge that you have used the ideas of other people is through the use of footnotes and bibliographies.

Footnotes (placed at the bottom of a page) or endnotes (placed at the end of a document) are to be provided when you quote or paraphrase from another document, or closely summarize the information provided in another document. You do not need to provide a footnote for information that is part of a 'body of knowledge'. That is, definitions do not need to be footnoted as they are part of the assumed knowledge.

Bibliographies should include a formal list of the resources that you used in your work. The listing should include all resources, including books,

magazines, newspaper articles, Internet-based resources, CDs and works of art. 'Formal' means that you should use one of the several accepted forms of presentation. You must provide full information as to how a reader or viewer of your work can find the same information. A bibliography is compulsory in the extended essay.

What constitutes misconduct?

Misconduct is behaviour that results in, or may result in, you or any student gaining an unfair advantage in one or more assessment component. Misconduct includes plagiarism and collusion.

Plagiarism is defined as the representation of the ideas or work of another person as your own. The following are the ways to avoid plagiarism:

- Words and ideas of another person used to support one's arguments must be acknowledged.
- Passages that are quoted verbatim must be enclosed within quotation marks and acknowledged.
- CD-ROMs, email messages, web-sites on the Internet, and any other electronic media must be treated in the same way as books and journals.
- The sources of all photographs, maps, illustrations, computer programs, data, graphs, audio-visual, and similar material must be acknowledged if they are not your own work.
- Works of art, whether music, film, dance, theatre arts, or visual arts, and where the creative use of a part of a work takes place, must be acknowledged.

Collusion is defined as supporting misconduct by another student. This includes:

- allowing your work to be copied or submitted for assessment by another student
- duplicating work for different assessment components and/or diploma requirements.

Other forms of misconduct include any action that gives you an unfair advantage or affects the results of another student.

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SYLLABUS
FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL ARMENIA COURSE

Mikayel Malkhasyan
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1. Course Description

History of Medieval Armenia is a part of the History of Armenia course (Armenian Curriculum) in the IB DP of Quantum College. The course aims to explore the essential characteristics and decisive events in the medieval period of the history of the Armenian nation. The course is designed as a build-up to Quantum College IB DP students' knowledge in the main fields of the history of Medieval Armenia, providing students with different research perspectives, methodologies, and recent development in this area.

Topics covered in this course include the most important historical processes and events in the history of Medieval Armenia. Upon completion of this course, students are expected to know;

1. The main concept of the Middle Ages in the history of the Armenian nation,
2. The most significant characteristics and crucial events of the history of Medieval Armenia.

The proposed course will have particular focus on;

1. Displaying abilities, skills and enriched knowledge of the fundamental issues of the historical process,
2. Understanding the importance of geopolitical changes in the Medieval Middle East, that had political impact on Armenia,
3. Exploring the cultural, social, economic, and political development in Medieval Armenia.

2. Objectives of the Course

The course will help students to develop;

1. Critical thinking,
2. Ability of having their own point of view,
3. Sufficient skills of raising and organizing research ideas,
4. General understanding of the historical development of Medieval Armenia.

Therefore, students will get the skills to understand;

1. The main issues of the historical process in Medieval Armenia,
2. The role of the history of Medieval Armenia within the system of the medieval regional and world history,
3. The cultural, social, economic, and political changes in Medieval Armenia.

3. Assessment

The assessment of the course will be based on students' written work and oral answers. Students will score their final grades from:

Oral answers – 40%

Written works (1 work per 2 weeks) – 30%

Final essay – 30%

Final essay

Based on their interest, students must choose any topic related to the course, and write an essay for the final assessment. It must be an in-depth historical investigation. Word count is set to be at least 4000 words, like extended essays. Scholars from Yerevan State University and from various other academic institutions should be involved in the process of organizing the supervision of the final essay.

TOPIC 1

Introduction to the History of Medieval Armenia: Scope and Features. The Adoption of Christianity and the Concept of Medieval Society in Armenia

The concept of medieval society in the history of the Armenian nation. The adoption of Christianity, and the new concept of civilization. Christianity, Feudalism, and the periodical scope of the Middle Ages in Armenia.

The Middle Ages is the middle period of the traditional division of the European history along with Antiquity and Modern period. This was a period of the Barbarian invasions, burgeoning of the Christian and Muslim civilizations, the Crusades, the Black Death (plague), the Renaissance, etc. In the Late Antiquity the Kingdom of Greater Armenia (Armenia Major) had been ruled by the Arsacid (Arshakuni) dynasty since 66 A.D., and they were the rulers of Armenia in the Early Middle Ages, too. The country had a vast territory of over 300 thousand sq. km. with its economic, social, cultural, demographic, and political unity.

How could the medieval period be described in Armenia? When did it start in Armenia? What was the main vector of the development of the Armenian society in the Early Middle Ages?

According to the recent research by the Armenian historians, the medieval period started in the Kingdom of Greater Armenia at the beginning of the 4th century A.D. under the Arsacid dynasty. This process was connected with at least two factors – the adoption of Christianity as the cultural basis for the Armenian medieval society, and the formation of feudalism as the social, economic, and political basis. In essence, these two factors were deeply connected with each other, and formed the conceptual scopes of the medieval society in Armenia.

What is feudalism? How much is it connected with the Armenian history? Did it really take place in Medieval Armenia?

Feudalism is a set of legal, economic, and military customs based on the relations between the land holders (lords) and their vassal population. The lands were controlled by the nobility. The population, especially rural, did not have their own lands. They lived on the feudal lands and worked for the landlords, paying percentage from their product. They were not slaves but they had to do service or labour for their landlord. As the famous Belgian medievalist Francois-Louis Ganshof stated in his research, medieval society was based on three principles – lords, vassals, and fiefs. Meanwhile, these three features are the main characteristics of the relationship institute within feudalism.

Feudalism was formed in the Kingdom of Greater Armenia earlier than both in the Roman Empire, the only state in the European continent, and the Sassanid Persia, the most powerful country in the Middle East. Armenian medieval authors (Moses of Khoren, Agathangelos, Pavstos Buzand, Lazar of Parbe, etc.) give us a lot of information about the early feudalism in Armenia. It is extremely interesting to read their thoughts upon these processes as they registered the changes within the society and often considered them strange. However, as we have already mentioned, feudalism progressed in Armenia very fast, and medieval historians could not register the fully detailed process of feudalization.

To understand the causes of the fast development of feudalism in Armenia, we should take into consideration social, economic, political, and cultural features of the Late Ancient Armenia.

First, we should consider the fact that Armenia was not a centre of slavery under the Arsacid rule, and population was mostly organized into rural and urban communities. In contrast, landholders used the labour of slaves in the Roman Empire, and they did not need to collaborate with the population to take only percents from the product. As no source proves that slavery existed in its classic form in Armenia, social-economic

“collaboration” between newly formed landlords and population could easily be formed.

Second, the Armenian nobility was appointed to various positions by the King of Greater Armenia. In the period of the formation of feudalism the Armenian noble families *(nakharars)* began to keep their positions hereditarily, and, therefore, they gained ownership status over the lands, given for the position. The inhabitants of the holdings became the vassals of the lord, and they had to pay taxes to their landlord. According to the early medieval sources (for example, inscriptions by King Tiridates I), the kings of Greater Armenia indirectly enhanced this process. As the Arsacids wanted to strengthen their rule in Armenia, they granted various positions to their supporters. Then, they left the holdings to their families when the successor, the son of the lord, remained the vassal of the king. This process took place in the whole early period of the Arsacid rule (1-3rd centuries) and continued even in the 4-5th centuries.

Third, until the 360s there were a number of flourishing cities in Armenia such as Artashat, Van, Armavir, Dvin, Vagharshapat, Yervandashat, Karin, Tigranakert, Zarishat, Zarehavan, etc. This was the main difference between the Armenian early feudalism and the European feudal society. These cities had mainly free population with their communities, and therefore, they were the social basis for the King. Keeping full control over the royal cities, the King also maintained the control over the main trade and military routes, and at the same time he could regulate the political steps of nakharars. Realising the crucial importance of the cities for the Kingdom of Greater Armenia, the Sassanid king Shapur II (309-379) moved the most of the urban population from Armenia to Persia. Considering the demographic data presented by Pavstos Buzand for this deportation, we can state that almost a dozen cities had nearly 100 thousand or even more population.

As we see, the Armenian nakharars became major figures in the medieval Armenian society. The Armenian pagan priesthood and later,

after the adoption of Christianity (301), the Armenian Apostolic Church held a lot of holdings, and they were great landlords as well. The head of the religious institution was the Supreme Judge of the Kingdom. Nakharars held state ministry positions *(gortsakalutyuns)* hereditarily and formed the state system. According to the famous Armenian historian of the 20th century Nicolas Adontz, even after the fall of the kingdom in 428, Armenia had its autonomous state system until the regaining of the independent kingdom in 885. He called it *nakharar system*, and the Sassanid King replaced the Armenian King in the feudal hierarchy.

Additional information

The most significant *gortsakalutyuns* were held by the most notable noble families. *Sparapetutyun*, the ministry of defense, was held by the Mamikonians. They were the factual commanders of the Armenian army which had at least 120 thousand soldiers. *Hazarapetutyun*, the ministry of economy, taxation, and construction, was held by the Gnunies and later by the Amatunies. *Tagadir aspetutyun*, the ministry of the royal etiquette and coronation of the King, was held by the Bagratids (Bagratunies). There were a few other ministries held by other notable families. These families formed the elite of the Armenian medieval feudal society.

Taking into consideration all above mentioned, we can state that feudalism became one of the main features of Medieval Armenia. Starting from the Early Middle Ages, nakharars became great powers within the Armenian society. With their holdings, position and military power, they became political giants and could often oppose to the King's policy. Therefore, these social-economic and political changes needed ideological changes, too. In fact, Christianity became the new ideology for the Armenian State.

Armenia had a great "cultural potential" to adopt Christianity. The doctrine of trinity has been dominating in the Armenian religious system

since the ancient times. In the late pagan period the trinity consisted from Aramazd (father), Anahit (mother), and Vahagn (son). Thus, it was easy for the medieval Armenian society to understand the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity which is based on the belief that *one* God is in three divine persons – Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. This concept was very acceptable for the Armenian Kings of the feudal period as the monotheistic concept of one God could show that the King was in the centre of the feudal society, and his authority was given by God. Therefore, the King of Greater Armenia could show his authority upon nakharars. At the same time, he could ideologically prove his independent foreign policy, linking on the concept of the authority given by God. So, neither the Roman Emperor nor the Sassanid King could pretend that the Armenian King was appointed by them.

Here we should take into consideration the fact that the first Christian King of Greater Armenia, Tiridates III (Trdat III, 274-276, 287/298-330), took his throne with the support by the Romans. The security of Armenia was guaranteed with the treaty of Mtsbin (Nisibis) which was signed between the Roman and Sassanid empires in 298. So, Tiridates found ideological basis for his independent reign in the period of the feudal society and for the establishment of balanced foreign policy.

Christianity had widely spread to a few regions of Armenia since the 1st century. The first missioners of Christianity in Armenia were Saint Thaddeus and Saint Bartholomew who were among the Twelve Apostles of Jesus. That is why the Armenian Church is officially called Armenian *Apostolic* Church.

The Christian communities vastly spread in Armenia in the 2-3th centuries. At first, they were persecuted by the authorities, but according to the Holy Tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church and medieval Armenian and foreign authors, Christianity was declared as the state religion by King Tiridates III in 301.

Additional information

The Armenian medieval historian Agathangelos tells us the complete history of the adoption of Christianity. According to him, the central figures in that process were King Tiridates and his court secretary, Gregory (Grigor), who was a Christian. When Tiridates discovered that Gregory was a Christian and the son of his father's, Khosrov II's, murderer Anac (Anak), he condemned Gregory into a deep pit, Khor Virab.

During the period of Gregory's imprisonment a group of virgin nuns, led by Gayane, fled the Roman persecutions by the Emperor Diocletian (284-305) and established in Armenia. Tiridates fell in love with a member of the group, Hripsime, and asked her to marry. The virgin refused the offer of the pagan King, and Tiridates ordered to execute the whole group. According to the Holy Tradition, Tiridates was deeply stressed and became seriously ill after these events. Linking on the dream of the King's sister, Gregory was summoned to heal the King from depression and animal behavior. Tiridates was cured, and in 301 he officially proclaimed Armenia the first Christian nation.

After the conversion to Christianity, Saint Gregory the Illuminator (Grigor Lusavorich) became the first Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church, ruling until 325. In a few years all the major pagan centers were converted to Christian churches. According to the medieval Armenian historian Stephen Orbelian (Stepanos Orbelyan, 13th century), Gregory the Illuminator set 36 episcopacies from which, according to another Armenian historian of the 5th century, Pavstos Buzand, 12 were held by the former pagan notable priest families. According to Agathangelos, almost the whole population was baptized by Gregory I in the river of Eastern Euphrates. On August 15, 303, the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin opened the doors to the adherents.

The adoption of Christianity was an important event in the history of Armenian nation. Passing through a process of nationalization in the 4-5th centuries, the Armenian Apostolic Church became a National Church. At the same time, the Armenian society has become a part of the global Christian community since the Christianization of the neighboring countries (Georgia, Caucasian Albania, the Roman Empire, etc.). Since 373 the Armenian Catholicos has been consecrated by 12 Armenian bishops. Since the invention of the Armenian alphabet by Saint Mesrop Mashtots in 405, the whole liturgy within the Church has been done in Classical Armenian (Grabar). Then, the Holy Bible was translated from Greek to Armenian. Therefore, Christianity determined the cultural vector of the medieval Armenian society with new model of civilization – a model of "cultural nation", which is a part of global Christian community with its local national characteristics. Thus, the conversion to Christianity announced the start of the Middle Ages in Armenia.

Tiridates III wanted to rule the country with centralized governing. He strengthened the ministries *(gortsakalutyuns)* and the Armenian Apostolic Church to enhance his policy of centralized governing. He used the political, economic, and military potential of the most notable nakharars giving them various positions and holdings. For example, hazarapetutyun was given to Ota Amatuni, who became one of the main supporters of the King's policy.

According to the Roman historian Eusebius of Caesarea (260/265-340), Tiridates III had to stop the invasion of the Roman Emperor Caius Maximinus II Daia (308-313) in 311. The Emperor's purpose was to crush the newly established Christian religion in Armenia as Christianity was a persecuted religion in Rome. This was the first recorded war for the Christian belief in the human history. Maximinus had to retreat, and Armenia remained a Christian nation. Soon, the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (306/312-337, and 324-337 as the Emperor of the whole empire) issued the Edict of Tolerance (the Edict of Milan, 313) which allowed Christianity within his state borders. This new concept of the

religious policy in Rome helped to improve the relations between Greater Armenia and the Roman Empire.

Tiridates wanted to have good relations also with the Sassanid Persia. But there was a large gap in the relations between the two states. The ruling dynasty in Armenia, the Arsacids, was the former ruler of Iran. The Arsacids were dethroned as the kings of the Parthian Empire in 226 by the Persian Sassanids. As the Arsacids were the kings of Armenia as well, they became "the natural enemies" of the Sassanids. All the wars in Armenia and nearby the borders during the 3rd century were caused by the dynastic incongruity, and that is why Tiridates surely avoided any dynastic war against the Sassanids. He wisely used the point of "40 years without war" of the treaty of Nisibis (298) and defended the kingdom from foreign invasions with political steps.

Tiridates III continued to strengthen the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church. After Gregory I's resignation, Tiridates asked him to consecrate Gregory's youngest son Aristakes as a bishop. Saint Aristakes participated in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) where he significantly contributed to the development of the Nicene Creed, the basic canons of the Christian faith. Returning to Armenia, he became the second Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church, reigning in 325-333. Tiridates supported Aristakes to continue the Christianization of the region. Tiridates set Gregory, the son of Verthanes, Gregory I's oldest son, as the bishop of the episcopacies of the Eastern Sides of Armenia (Utik, Artsakh, Paytakaran), Georgia and Caucasian Albania to continue the process of Christianization. Trying to convert the Eastern Caucasian tribe of Mazkuts from paganism to Christianity, Saint Gregory was murdered. Therefore, the process of Christianization to the north-east from Armenia was over.

Tiridates worked hard to spread Christianity to all the sides of Armenia. This policy found resistance by both the pagan priesthood and some nakharars. Tiridates defeated their troops in the early 300s. However,

polytheism was ideologically deeply rooted in the Armenian nakharars. Medieval Armenian historian Moses of Khoren (Movses Khorenatsi) even states that Tiridates was poisoned by some nakharars, but no other source proves this statement. Tiridates died in 330.

So, we have the starting point of the medieval society in Armenia – the adoption of Christianity (301), mostly considered as a positive event determining cultural, social, and political development of Armenia. In fact, the medieval society became major in Armenia earlier than in Europe, where the beginning of the Middle Ages was in 476 with the fall of the Western Roman Empire, mostly considered as a negative event.

On the contrary, the end of the Middle Ages in Armenia came later than in Europe. As it is acceptable for most of the European historians, the most crucial event to be considered as the beginning of the modern history of Europe is the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492. This was an event of new opportunities and determined quite a new way of development. However, the end of the medieval period came in the middle of the 17th century in Armenia.

If we have to put a “plus” or “minus” symbol for the vector of the development of Armenia at the end of the Middle Ages, we would surely put “-”, as that was a time of crush. Armenia had been suffering from the endless wars between the Safavid and Ottoman Empires since the beginning of the 16th century, and because of the wars the Armenian population was scattering out from the motherland. The most devastating event in the Late Medieval Armenia was the deportation of over 350 (even 600) thousand Armenians from Armenia to Persia by Abbas I (1587-1629). Later, Armenia was eventually divided between the two empires in 1639, and this political reality took place until the beginning of the 19th century when the Russian Empire became one of the major political players in this region. So, we can consider 1639 the end of the Middle Ages as it set quite new political reality in Armenia, reality which was supposed to have its cultural, demographic, and social-economic consequences. The

new era would begin with the national liberation movement in the middle of the 17th century.

Taking into consideration all above mentioned, we can conclude that Armenia entered the Middle Ages with its own sovereign kingdom, the Kingdom of Greater Armenia, and left this period without its sovereignty. So, it is quite a contrasting historical period for Armenia; it was a flourishing and fast-developing feudal country at the beginning of the era, but with the invasion of the Mongol and Turkmen tribes, the Ottomans and Safavids, its development became slower and slower. Meanwhile, the main feature of the new concept of the Armenian civilization based on its Christianized culture helped the nation to maintain its identity through the centuries even without a sovereign state.

Assignment

Please, answer the following questions (600-900 words in sum).

1. Do you agree with the chronological division of the History of Medieval Armenia? Please, explain your opinion.

2. In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of the medieval Armenian society? Please, explain your opinion.

3. How would you describe the main achievements of the Armenian nation from adoption of Christianity?

TOPIC 2

The Kingdom of Greater Armenia in 330-428 A.D.

The Arsacid Dynasty after the adoption of Christianity. The nakharar system and the King. Foreign policy of the Arsacid Dynasty: the Roman and Sassanid Empires and the partition of the Kingdom of Greater Armenia. The fall of the Kingdom.

The political steps of Tiridates III within the kingdom and outside its borders strengthened the royal authority, and, in essence, Tiridates' flexible foreign policy helped to guarantee the kingdom's sustainable development.

The situation changed after Tiridates' death. His son, Khosrov III the Kotak[1] (330-338), succeeded the throne. Khosrov III continued his father's policy, but his reign started with feudal rebels and foreign invasion by the Caucasian tribes of Mazkuts. So, we see results of the feudalization. *Sparapet* (commander-in-chief) Vatche Mamikonian crushed the rebellions and beat the Mazkut troops at the battle of Oshakan (331).

Then, Khosrov continued the policy of centralization of the state government. He ordered the most notable nakharars to stay at the royal palace so that he could control their political steps. Since the climate in the capital Artashat became unhealthy, Khosrov decided to move the royal seat from Artashat to Dvin, which was very close to Artashat. He planted two forests next to the city of Dvin. The forests served not only for the improvement of the natural-climatic conditions of Artashat and

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[1] "Kotak" means "small" or "short". Some modern scholars, such as Babken Harutyunyan, consider Khosrov to be Khosrov II taking into consideration the fact that the Roman sources sometimes mix Khosrov I with Tiridates II.

Dvin, but also as a royal ground for hunting. One of his forests has survived through centuries, thus being one of the oldest protected forests in the world. Khosrov Forest State Reserve, as it is called nowadays, is the closest forest area located near the capital of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan.

The establishment of Dvin was also a real political step. The King wanted to strengthen his authority with the development of the cities. At the same time, he enhanced wars between nakharars to have an evidence for punishing them and taking their holdings. In this way he gained complete control over the Royal Avenue which was the main trade and military route in Armenia. This policy was later continued by Tiran, Khosrov's son, leading even to persecution of a few noble families.

Khosrov had to cancel the later steps of his reforms because of the foreign invasion by the Sassanids in the last years of his reign. Armenian nakharars Bakur and Databen Bznuni were sent to stop the foreign invasion, but they joined the Persian army. Then, sparapet Vatche Mamikonian defeated the enemy's army. The traitor nakharars were executed by the order of the King. However, a new invasion took place in 337. The Armenian army, led by Vatche Mamikonian, defeated the Sassanid troops, but the sparapet died in the battle.

Additional information

Catholicos Verthaness (333-341) canonized Vatche Mamikonian and a few martyred generals. They were the first martyrs to be canonized for their act of bravery for the motherland. This was the beginning of a national tradition that the Armenian Apostolic Church maintained through the following centuries. The same approach was inherited for the martyrs of the battle of Avarayr, in 451, led by sparapet Vardan Mamikonian.

Saint Gregory of Tatev (Grigor Tatevatsi, 14-15th centuries) is the last canonized person of the Armenian Church. Later, in 2015, on the centennial of the Armenian Genocide (1894-1923, mainly - 1915), the victims of the Genocide were canonized by the Church as the Holy Martyrs.

After Khosrov's death his son, Tiran (Tiranes), became the King, reigning in 339-350. His oldest son Tiridates was kept hostage in Rome when Tiran came to throne with the support of the Romans, who helped to finally move out the Sassanid army from Armenia. The Sassanids considered Tiran's foreign policy to be more pro-Roman than complimentary. The dynastic tension again took place in the relations between the two countries as the successor of the Armenian throne was still being kept in Rome. Tiran was consciously trying to avoid any misunderstanding in the relations with the Roman and Sassanid Empires in order to maintain the peace and organize balanced development of Armenia.

He continued his father's policy to control nakharars' activity and develop centralized state system. However, the invasion by Varaz, the Sassanid lord of Atropatene, crushed the stable development of Armenia. Varaz took hostage the King and gave him to the Sassanid king Shapur II (309-379). The Armenian nakharars tried to free the King but they failed, and only after the end of the war the mediation by the Roman Empire helped to free Tiran.

As Varaz had blinded Tiran, the King decided to resign from the throne. Tiran decided to make his son Arshak the successor of the throne as Tiridates was still kept in Rome. Arshak II (350-368) started to reign as a charismatic ruler, who respected the two empires, but wanted to rule the country independently. In the first period of his reign Arshak made Catholicos Nerses I the Great Partev (353-373) his closest friend and adviser, trying to use the influence of the Church on the society. This

policy helped him to enact various reforms, strengthening the royal authority.

Shortly after the above mentioned events Tiridates was executed by the Romans in order to terrorize the Armenian authorities in their political steps. Then, Catholicos Nerses I the Great asked the Romans to set free Tiridates' sons, Tirit and Gnel, and soon they returned to the motherland. It is obvious that the Roman Empire set them free as the Emperor wanted to use them as the legal successors of the throne in order to dethrone Arshak II.

Additional information

According to the medieval Armenian historian Pavstos Buzand (5th century), Tirit fell in love with Parandzem, Gnel's wife, and told Arshak that Gnel wanted to become the King of Greater Armenia. Arshak paid attention to several factors; Gnel often visited the resigned King Tiran, and he lived in the central province of Ayrarat where from the royal family members only the King, the Queen and the successor of the throne had the right to live. These facts worried Arshak, and he ordered to execute Gnel. According to Pavstos Buzand, the King realized Gnel was innocent, and soon Tirit was executed, too. Arshak and Parandzem got married.

This story looks like a romantic drama with its tragic elements, but we cannot avoid paying attention to the political features of the case as Arshak II had real political reasons to execute his nephews. Arshak could eventually understand the danger for the political stability and sovereignty of his country if the Romans used Gnel and Tirit to make one of them the King of Greater Armenia. Therefore, the drama, presented by the medieval historian, includes zipped political elements which give us an opportunity to make several historical facts clear.

Arshak II was a talented politician. He organized a political project to keep the nakharar system under his control, establishing the city of Arshakavan in the heart of the state. This was a city of absolute freedom as the King let everybody move to the city. A lot of debtors and vassals migrated from the nakharars' lands. Even criminals could escape the court moving to Arshakavan. The city became a real social basis for the royal authority in a short period of time. Everyone in the kingdom felt defended by the King from the executions by the landlords. This caused the nakharars' complaint, as it was against their feudal interests. And when Arshak made an official visit to Georgia, a few nakharars attacked and ruined the city. Returning from Georgia, Arshak punished some of the organizers of the act, but the city had already been destroyed and was never reconstructed.

Another interesting event during Arshak's governance was the Council of Ashtishat in 354. Several religious and feudal principles were developed during the council. It was stated that the King and nakharars should respect their vassals and should not take more taxes than the fixed ones. At the same time, vassals should respect their lords and faithfully serve them. The Council of Ashtishat banned polygamy, marriage between relatives, public drunkenness, suicides and even harsh cry at funerals. Arshak II and Nerses I organized the council as a significant step to complete the adoption of the principles of Christianity. The key decisions were based on the Nicene Creed and the principles of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.

The peaceful development of Armenia was disturbed in the late 350s and 360s. Another war burst out between The Roman and Sassanid Empires. Shapur II asked Arshak II to become an ally in this war. Thus, Arshak II had to determine his steps in the foreign policy, and decided to help Shapur. He moved his army to Nisibis and defeated the Romans. It was the beginning of the military cooperation between the former enemies, the Arsacids and Sassanids. However, according to Pavstos Buzand, Shapur suggested Arshak to marry to his daughter in order to stren-

gthen the alliance, but Arshak refused as she was not a Christian. Soon, Arshak was informed that Shapur intended to organize his murder, and he decided to return to Armenia.

When the Romans organized a new military campaign to the Middle East, Arshak decided to become their ally. He went to the military base of the Romans in Caesarea, met the Emperor, Constantius II (337-361, and 350-361 as the Sole Emperor), and they signed a treaty. The beginning of the war was very successful for the Romans. However, Emperor Julian II the Apostate (361-363) was fatally wounded by the Sassanid troops in the battle of Samarra in 363. Newly inaugurated Emperor Jovian (363-364) surrendered his interests in the conflict with the Sassanids and signed a peace treaty with them.

The Roman medieval historian of Greek descent Ammianus Marcellinus (330-400) calls this "a Shameful Treaty" because Jovian, who was a strong adherent of Christianity and reestablished the rights of the religion within the Empire, left another Christian nation alone against the Zoroastrian Empire of Sassanids. According to the historian, this policy was seen as a disgrace in the Roman society.

Taking into consideration the fact that the Roman Empire left Arshak II alone in the confict with the Sassanids, Shapur II organized several campaigns which failed to have great success. According to Pavstos Buzand, the Sassanid troops destroyed the most important Armenian cities and captured almost their entire population. A few notable Armenian nakharars joined Shapur's troops because of having been suggested new positions in the state system by the Persian King.

The Sassanid army attacked the mausoleum of the Armenian Arsacids in the castle of Ani in the province of Bardzr Hayq (the Upper Armenia) and tried to ruin their tombs. They succeeded in destroying the mausoleum but failed to break King Sanatruk's (88-110) tomb, which was constructed extremely carefully. Taking out the remains of the Armenian

Kings, the Sassanid troops tried to move them to Persia. Pavstos Buzand conveys the words by the Sassanids telling that they captured the remains to take the Arsacids' praise and bravery for themselves. However, the Armenian army, led by sparapet Vasak Mamikonian, defeated the invaders and reburied the royal remains in a new mausoleum in the village of Aghtzk, in the Aragatsotn region. Recent archaeological expeditions have found the exact place of the mausoleum and opened the tombs of the Arsacid Kings in November, 2016.

Obviously, we can see the ongoing dynastic war between the Arsacids and Sassanids in the whole 3-4th centuries. The Sassanids wanted to eradicate the Arsacid Dynasty in order to guarantee the later existence and development of their own dynasty. They still remembered the fact that Armenia was the second state in the system of the Arsacid Dynasty along with the Parthian Empire which was eliminated by the Sassanids in 226.

Additional information

To understand the dynastic issue in the conflict between the Sassanids and the Armenian Arsacids, we should pay attention to some other information by Pavstos Buzand. He tells that after the ongoing wars with no result for the Sassanids, Shapur II invited Arshak II to sign a peace treaty. After receiving the Holy Oath of the Zoroastrian Sassanids, the Holy Sault with the Royal Ring, Arshak II and sparapet Vasak Mamikonian went to Tizbon (Ctesiphon) in 368. Then Shapur started to tempt the Armenian King. He secretly scattered Armenian land and water on half of his royal hall floor and asked what Arshak II would do when he returned to Armenia. In the Persian half of the hall Arshak began to apologize and felt like a vassal; on the contrary, he became brave and strong in the Armenian side. Having seen Arshak's behavior in his motherland, Shapur ordered to imprison him and his sparapet.

This story could have been a legend but there are some interesting "encoded" details in Buzand's data. When Arshak was on the Armenian side, he told that he would continue the wars against the Sassanids as they had become the lords of their former lords, the Arsacids, and he would not forgive that act against his Arsacid brothers. Thus, we see the continuation of the dynastic conflict. And surely, the Sassanids would not let the Kingdom of Greater Armenia flourish and have its own sovereignty under the Arsacids.

Shapur II sent new divisions of troops to Armenia. The country could not organize real defense without the King and sparapet, and therefore, the successor to the throne, Arshak's son Pap (Papas), moved to the Roman Empire. Emperor Valens (364-378) thought of reestablishing the Empire's interests in the region and used the suitable situation. Valens sent troops to re-impose Pap on the Armenian throne, and at the same time Shapur II organized a new campaign. In fact, Pap's first attempt was a failure, but soon he succeeded with the support of the Roman general Terentius. Vasak Mamikonian's son, Moushegh, became the sparapet of the Armenian army and helped the King to reorganize the army, to fight against the Sassanid invasion, and to reestablish full control over the Armenian territories.

Pap reigned in 370-374. This was a short period of political processes that hindered the reestablishment of the prosperity of the country.

First of all, Pap and Moushegh defeated the Sassanids in several battles and restored the borders of the country. The most crucial battle took place in the Dzirav Valley in the centre of the kingdom in 371. 90 thousand Armenian soldiers along with their Roman allies defeated the Sassanid army and moved them away from Armenia. The leader of the apostate nakharars, Merouzhan Artstruni, who converted to the Zoroastrian faith and thus wanted to become the King of Armenia within

the Sassanid system, was captured and executed by one of the most notable nakharars, Smbat Bagratuni. The latter was responsible for the coronation of the King, and “inaugurated” Merouzhan with slightly heated iron “crown”.

Next year Shapur II attempted another invasion but failed as Moushegh Mamikonian bested the aggressors. He stopped the enemy’s army not far from the frontier, and defeated them in the battle of Gandzak. Then Shapur II was forced to have a deal with the Middle-Asian Kushan invasion into the eastern provinces of his country, and for the next five years, the Sassanids gave up their policy of subjugation of the Arsacid Armenia.

The new geopolitical conditions in the region gave an opportunity to make reforms within the kingdom. As the 360s and the early 370s were a time of endless wars and deportation, population had slightly declined. The mortality rate was too high during the decade of the 360s, and it caused low fertility rate in the early 370s. Pap thought of enhancing the increase of the population. He closed all the nunneries and ordered their inhabitants to marry. Pap also reduced the number of monks and ordered them and their relatives to serve to the state. He confiscated vast holdings from the Church, and made them an economic basis for keeping a great army of about 100 thousand soldiers. The King banned most of the taxes given from the agricultural production to the Church, so that the rural population could overcome the disastrous economic consequences of the decade of wars.

The military and economic reforms helped to improve the balanced development of the country in a short period of time, and Pap undertook a policy to regain complete sovereignty of Armenia. As he had taken the throne with the support of the Romans, he had to consider their opinion in his foreign affairs. There was still a Roman military base in Greater Armenia. Pap wanted to change these geopolitical conditions.

Eventually, Pap decided to set the full autocephaly of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Church made decisions independently, but since the consecration of Gregory I the Armenian Catholicoses had been anointed by the Metropolitan of Caesarea. The fact that the Metropolitan's policy in the region was sometimes oriented by the Roman Emperor was not favourable for both the Armenian Church and the State. After the death of Nerses I, Pap did not allow the next Catholicos to go to Caesarea, and organized his consecration by the Armenian bishops. According to Pavstos Buzand, soon Pap even demanded the control of a ten Roman Cities in Asia Minor, and Edessa, claiming that "they were built by our ancestors".

Fearing that Pap would ally with the Sassanids and re-establish the former power of Greater Armenia, Valens made an unsuccessful attempt to capture Pap. The Emperor invited Pap to the Cilician city of Tarsus, but Pap was soon informed about the conspiracy and made a successful escape with his 300 bodyguards.

However, Pap was executed by the Roman general Trajanus, the newly appointed commander of the Roman military base in Greater Armenia, during a "friendly" feast in the base, in 374. Thus, Armenia lost a significant ruler who had intended to strengthen the royal authority and make the Kingdom of Greater Armenia a great power.

As Pap's two sons, Arshak and Vagharshak, were little babies, the reign of the straight line of the Armenian Arsacid Dynasty was interrupted with Pap's death. This case gave an opportunity to the Romans to control the solution of the royal succession in Armenia.

After Pap's death Valens recognized Varazdat Arsacid as the King of Greater Armenia. Varazdat was Pap's relative, living in Rome. He ruled in 374-378 under the regency of sparapet Moushegh Mamikonian, and they followed pro-Roman foreign policy. Varazdat feared the great influence that Moushegh had gained within the country. He was worried

about the fact that Moushegh had very good relations with the Romans. The sparapet was even planning a strategic partnership in field of establishing common defense system between the two states. His negotiations with the Roman authorities caused various speculations in the royal house. Pressed by a few nakharars, who ensured that Moushegh had had a deal with Pap's execution, Varazdat organized Moushegh's murder. To avoid political anomalies, the execution was organized during a feast like in Pap's case. Thereafter, Moushegh's plans were not realized.

In the late period of Varazdat's reign Manuel Mamikonian, a close relative to Moushegh Mamikonian, returned from Persian captivity and regained his familiar holdings, becoming the sparapet of the Armenian army. He insisted on Varazdat's resignation, and the latter had to leave Armenia. The Roman Empire had a lot of other problems within the country and did not support Varazdat. Manuel inaugurated Pap's oldest son Arshak as the King of Greater Armenia. As Arshak III (378-387) was too young, he, along with his little brother Vagharshak, ruled under the regency of the sparapet.

After Manuel's death Shapur III (383-388) sent Khosrov IV Arsacid (385-388, 414-415) to reign under the Sassanid hegemony. Arshak had to leave for the Roman-controlled far west of his motherland. When Arshak III died, the Roman Emperor Theodosius I the Great (379-392, and 392-395 as the Sole Emperor) eliminated the status of the western kingdom. Conversely, the Sassanids, who had a control over the major part of Greater Armenia, decided to keep the status of kingdom in Eastern Armenia. To legalize the geopolitical reality, the Sassanid and Roman Empires divided Armenia by treaty in 387.

Despite being enthroned by the Sassanids, Khosrov decided to reunite the kingdom. He suggested Theodosius I to reign over the Western-Armenian territories paying annual taxes. This was a factual reunion of the Kingdom of Greater Armenia.

Khosrov appointed Nerses I's son, Sahak Partev, the last male representative of Gregory I's family, as the Catholicos (387-439). This was a significant step to strengthen the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church as an important figure in the social and political system.

Shapur III was disappointed by Khosrov's foreign policy and imprisoned him. Several notable nakharars tried to set him free, but they were martyred. So, the policy to reunite the kingdom failed.

The Sassanids let Khosrov's brother, Vramshapuh, become the King of the Kingdom of Eastern Armenia. Vramshapuh's reign (388-414) was a period of ongoing peace. He wisely used geopolitical changes in the region and reunited Armenia, paying annual tribute to the two empires. The most significant event during Vramshapuh's reign was the invention of the Armenian alphabet by Saint Mesrop Mashtots in 405. The king seriously supported Mesrop Mashtots and Catholicos Sahak Partev to open schools and organize education in the Armenian language.

After Vramshapuh's death the Armenian nakharars asked the Sassanid king Yazdegerd I (399-420) to let Khosrov IV regain his throne. He was set free from prison. About 8 months later he died. Then, Yazdegerd enthroned his own son, Shapur, who ruled the Kingdom of Eastern Armenia in 415-419. With this political step Yazdegerd wanted to establish the Sassanid system in Armenia. According to the medieval Armenian historian Moses of Khoren (5th century), the nakharars did not like Shapur and did not support his rule. In 419 Shapur had to leave for Ctesiphon to support his father against the rebellion in the capital, but soon he was killed there in 420.

After the short war between the Eastern Roman (since 395) and Sassanid Empires in 421-422, Vramshapuh's son, Artashes, reigned in Eastern Armenia. The nakharar system had reached its peak at the period. According to the medieval Armenian historian Lazar of Parbe (Ghazar Parpetsi, 5th century), a few Armenian nakharars complained against their

King, asking the Sassanid King to dethrone Artashes. Using these pleasant conditions, Bahram V (421-438) deposed Artashes in 428. Saint Sahak I was dethroned, too, as he refused to act against Artashes. Only 4 years later Sahak I was given an opportunity to return to Armenia and reclaim his throne.

The Kingdom of Greater Armenia lost independence as the two empires, the Sassanid Persia and the Eastern Roman Empire, continually ruined the roots of the kingdom. At the same time, the nakharar system was flourishing, and felt no need of the King.

The Sassanids established marzpanate in Armenia appointing senior governor – *marzpan.* All the gortsakalutyuns and holdings with their military power had still been held by the Armenian nakharars, but they had to pay annual taxes to the Sassanid King, who was on the top of the feudal hierarchy.

Assignment

Please, answer the following questions (600-900 words in sum).

1. Do you agree with Arshak II's domestic policy? Please, explain your opinion.

2. In your opinion, what kind of foreign policy should the late Arsacid kings hold? Thinking critically, please, try to describe the possible steps that could lead to better foreign affairs.

3. What are the main reasons of the fall of the Arsacid dynasty? Can we state that the Arsacid Kingdom of Armenia could maintain independence? Please, explain your opinion with your arguments, taking into consideration possible counter-arguments.

TOPIC 3

Armenia under the Nakharar State System (428-885 A.D.)

Nakharars as the main feature of the post-kingdom state system. The Marzpanate period. National liberation movements against the Sassanid and Byzantine rules (5-6th centuries). The Arab conquest of Armenia. The Ostikanate of Arminiya and the nakharars. The way towards the reestablishment of the kingdom.

After the fall of the Kingdom of Greater Armenia in 428, Armenia became a marzpanate of the Sassanid Empire, and the western provinces had been under the Byzantine[2] rule since 387.

So, Greater Armenia lost the status of kingdom. However, we had a deal with another state system after the decline of the Arsacids. According to Nicholas Adontz (1871-1942), the famous specialist of the Byzantine and Armenian studies, the princely state system took place in Armenia in 428(389)-885 held by the nakharars. He called it *nakharar system.* In essence, that was the continuation of the former state system without the Armenian King.

How can we describe the nakharar system? What was the main difference of the system between the Byzantine and Sassanid rules?

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[2] The Roman Empire was divided into Western and Eastern Roman Empires in 395. The western part became a place of barbarian invasions, and the last Emperor, Romulus Augustulus (475-476), was deposed from the throne by Germanic general Flavius Odoacer. The Eastern Roman or the Byzantine Empire became a major political, military, economic, and cultural centre of both Medieval Europe and the Middle East. It maintained its sovereignty until 1453, when the Ottoman troops occupied Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire.

Let us start the “journey” from the provinces ruled by the Byzantine Empire. Here we can easily classify two types of Armenian provinces; the north-western provinces with the increasing role of the Byzantine nobility, and the south-western provinces with the native Armenian nakharars. Step by step, the north-western part of the Armenian provinces became like Lesser Armenia (Armenia Minor) under the Byzantine rule, where the Armenian nobility had already lost their dominance. After the reforms, organized by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I the Great (527-565), the Armenian nakharars quickly coalesced into the Byzantine nobility. The Armenian nobles even entered the Royal Court and held several key positions in the 6-11th centuries. The most significant event in this context was the reign of the Armenian (Macedonian) Dynasty in the Byzantine Empire in 867-1056.

In contrast, we have quite a different situation in the Armenian provinces ruled by the Sassanids. Here we can see the holistic state system of Greater Armenia, just without the Armenian King. All the gortsakalutyuns were still held by the Armenian nakharar families. The Persian marzpan (senior governor) was just the representative of the Sassanid King. He had to collect the taxes from the Armenian nakharars and send them to the Sassanid King. The latter replaced the Armenian King in the Armenian hierarchic state system, as the Armenian nakharars became his vassals. The nakharars had legal rights to maintain hereditarily owned territories, state positions, and military power. Their domestic policy was autonomous, but their foreign policy was limited. And what is very important, they were not considered to be the vassals of marzpan. Only the Sassanid King could order the nakharars to do military service for the needs of the Neo-Persian Empire, and the Armenian sparapet was directly under the command of the Persian King. So, the state system was transformed from kingdom into princely system.

However, Persian King Yazdegerd II (439-457) wanted to weaken the autonomous power of Armenia. Therefore, he used the military power of the Armenian nakharars in the wars against Huns in the eastern borders

of the Sassanid Empire. With this policy, he both strengthened his eastern borders and weakened the military power of the Armenian nobility. Yazdegerd's next step was the appointment of Denshapur as a royal representative and "a census-maker" in 447. The latter organized a population census to increase taxes. In the end, taxes increased 3-4 times. Sometimes new taxes were even not fixed. According to the medieval Armenian historian Yeghishe (5th century), the Sassanid officials were surprised how Armenia maintained its economic power even after the huge increase of taxation.

Denshapur made a lot of new appointments in order to abate the role of the Armenian nobility. For example, hazarapetutyun was occupied by a Persian noble. At the same time, Denshapur wanted to enhance the influence of the Zoroastrian priesthood in Armenia. Therefore, he appointed a Zoroastrian priest as the Supreme Judge of Armenia instead of the Armenian Catholicos. It was the beginning of the attempts to Zoroastrianize the Sassanid-ruled Armenia.

Denshapur's policy was met with great disappointment within the Armenian nobility. The policy was set to abolish the Armenian traditional nakharar system and the Armenian Apostolic Church as the cultural basis of the medieval Armenian society. The last step to fill the cup of patience of the Armenian nobles was the order to convert from Christianity to Zoroastrianism in 449. Yazdegerd's order was seriously discussed at the Artashat Council. Armenian nakharars, led by marzpan Vasak Syuni (Vasak of Syunik), sparapet Vardan Mamikonian, and Catholicos Hovsep Hoghotsmetsi (Joseph of Hoghotzim, or Joseph of Vayots Dzor, 440-452), declined "the offer" of the Sassanid King, stating that "even angels can't make Armenians deny Christianity".

Yazdegerd was disappointed with this answer, and he ordered the nakharars to go to Ctesiphon to explain the decision. The Sassanid king of kings called the Georgian and Caucasian-Albanian nobles as well. The nobles were offered to convert to Zoroastrianism, otherwise they would

be assassinated. The nakharars decided to make a fake adoption of the Sassanid state religion in order to have an opportunity to return to their motherland and organize rebellion. The fake conversion took place in the spring of 450.

Yazdegerd was a brilliant politician. He decided not to allow Vasak Syuni's sons, Babik and Atrnerseh, to return to Armenia in order to guarantee the later political steps of the marzpan. He sent Zoroastrian priests and a group of guards along with the Armenian nakharars. Their mission was to destroy the Armenian churches and build Zoroastrian temples instead of them.

Hearing the news that the nakharars converted to Zoroastrianism, the Armenian society got in despair and panic. When the nakharars and Zoroastrian priests reached the town of Angegh and wanted to destroy the church, the population, led by a Christian priest, St. Ghevond Yeretz, rebelled and did not let them destroy the church. This event made the nakharars reveal their political plans earlier than they had expected, and they announced that a fake conversion had taken place. They organized a council and declared "The Covenant of Belief" in order to keep the Christian faith and continue the rebellion.

To guarantee their next political steps, the nakharars organized the full liberation of the country, moving out the Persian garrisons from Armenia. They re-established the holistic nakharar system with its all gortsakalutyuns held by the traditional nakharar families. To strengthen their military positions, the nakharars decided to make a coalition with the Christian neighbour state, the Byzantine Empire, as well as the Huns. However, the Byzantine Empire refused to support the rebellion as they had recently signed a peace treaty with the Sassanids. They even informed Yazdegerd about the next steps of the Armenian nobles and signed a new treaty with Persia. So, the Armenian nakharars did not get any support from the Christian empire.

Along with the imposing of Zoroastrianism in Armenia, Yazdegerd enhanced the same process in Georgia and Caucasian Albania. Thus, when the Armenian nobles were planning their next steps, they were informed that the Sassanid troops invaded Caucasian Albania. Soon, the Albanian nobles and priesthood asked their Armenian neighbors to help them move out foreign invasion. The nakharars decided to help Caucasian Albania, and divided their army into three divisions. First one was led by Nershapuh Artstruni, whose mission was the protection of the Armenian borders from the attacks from Atropatene. The second division, led by Vardan Mamikonian, moved to Caucasian Albania to help the northeastern ally. The third part, led by marzpan Vasak Syuni, had to stay in Ayrarat, the central province of Armenia.

Crossing the River of Kur (Kura), Vardan Mamikonian faced the Persian troops near the town of Khaghkhagh. Mamigonian defeated the Sassanid troops, liberated Albanian cities and moved to the northern borders of the Sassanid Empire where he signed a treaty with Huns. These events could have crucial consequences for the Sassanid Empire, and Yazdegerd decided to organize a decisive campaign to Armenia. Meanwhile, Vardan Mamikonian was informed that marzpan Vasak Syuni, the main organizer of the rebellion, had left Ayrarat and moved to his feudal holdings in the province of Syunik. This could seriously affect the later development of the rebellion; therefore, Vardan Mamikonian decided to return to Armenia.

In order to crush the rebellion the Sassanid troops, led by Muskan Niusalavurt, invaded Armenia in the spring of 451. Vardan Mamikonian gathered 66 thousand soldiers and faced the three times larger Sassanid army in the field of Avarayr, in the region of Artaz. The Sassanid army had war elephants and Asbaran (Aswaran), the “immortal” cavalry, which could give them real advantage. The decisive battle took place on May 26, 451. The Armenian army started the attack in the morning, and Vardan Mamikonian crushed the right flank of the Persian army. However, it was clear that a larger number of Persian soldiers would change the result

of the battle; Vardan Mamikonian was tragically martyred, and the battle ended in the evening. According to Yeghishe, the Armenian and Persian sides lost 1036 and 3544 soldiers respectively. The Armenian Apostolic Church canonized all the martyrs in the battle of Avarayr.

Historians often consider the battle to end in a draw, as despite losing the battle, Armenians continued the rebellion. Yazdegerd imprisoned Catholicos Hovsep I, Ghevond Yeretz and a lot of significant priests and nakharars. Marzpan Vasak Syuni was also imprisoned, sentenced to death, and later died in prison. The imprisoned priests, along with 37 nakharars, were exiled to Vrkan (modern Mazandaran) in 452. After the end of the war against the Kushans next to their eastern borders, the Sassanids once again strengthened their policy of spreading Zoroastrianism within their borders. And then, the imprisoned Armenian priests were martyred in 454.

However, Yazdegerd II understood that, in fact, his policy of imposing Zoroastrianism and abolishment of the Armenian nakharar system had failed. He moved out the Sassanid troops from Armenia to avoid new rebellion. Soon, the feudal rights of the Armenian nobility were re-recognized by the Persian authorities.

The Sassanids continued their mild policy until the 470s when Peroz I (457/459-484) gave a right of succession to the younger members of nakharar families. This gave the Sassanids an opportunity to separate the holdings of the Armenian nobility in order to weaken the nakharar system. Peroz began to impose Zoroastrianism among the Armenian nobility, giving various gifts and positions to converted nakharars.

Most of nakharars were waiting for a suitable occasion to organize a new rebellion. Then, the northern neighbor of Armenia, Iberia (Eastern Georgia), rebelled against the Sassanids. The nakharars organized a meeting in Shirak and decided to rebel against the Sassanid regime. They set a government with all the gortsakalutyuns. For example, sparapetutyun was held by Vahan Mamikonian, who was the son of Vardan Mamikonian's

brother. Catholicos Hovhannes I (John I, 478-490) was appointed as the Supreme Judge. The most interesting in this context was the appointment of Sahak Bagratuni as the marzpan.

Why did the rebelling Armenians need a position that was a part of the Sassanid state system? There was no position of marzpan in the gortsakalutyuns within the nakharar system. Thus, it was an attempt to re-establish the kingdom, and marzpan was appointed to show the candidate of the throne. Here we should take into consideration the fact that Sahak Bagratuni ordered Moses of Khoren to write the holistic history of Armenia, from beginning to the times of the decline of the kingdom. So, we have a deal with a real project of re-establishing the Armenian Kingdom, and Sahak Bagratuni carefully considered both political and ideological factors that could enhance the success.

The Sassanid marzpan tried to defeat the rebelling nakharars, but failed. Vahan Mamikonian defeated the Sassanid troops in the battle of Akori in 481. As the Persian marzpan was killed at the battle, Peroz sent a new general with a larger army. However, the Sassanids were defeated at the battle of Nersehapat, not far from Avarayr, in 482.

Soon, the Iberian king Vakhtang I Gorgasali (449-502) asked Sahak Bagratuni and Vahan Mamikonian to help him against the Persian invasion, stating that Huns would also take part in the anti-Sassanid campaign. The Armenian army went to the ally country, but Huns did not arrive. Vakhtang suggested facing the Sassanid army with the existing forces. Unfortunately, the allies were defeated as a group of Georgian and Armenian nobles left the battlefield at the climax of the battle. Sahak Bagratuni was killed at the battle, and Vahan Mamikonian had to take the lead of the rebellion.

The sparapet returned to Armenia and tried to continue Sahak Bagratuni's political plans. Meanwhile, the Sassanid troops tried to use the suitable case of the recent crush and tried to capture Vahan Mamikonian. The latter successfully organized the defence and moved from side to side

within the western borders of the country. He organized a lot of successful quick attacks on the Persian garrisons that caused chaotic situation in the Sassanid army.

At the same time, Peroz I died at the battle of Herat against the Middle-Asian "White" Huns, Hephthalites, in 484. The new king of kings, Balash (484-488), decided to make peace with both Hephthalities and Armenia. Vahan Mamikonian and Balash's royal ambassador, Nikhor, signed the Treaty of Nvarsak (Nuarsag) in 484, which guaranteed Armenia's religious freedom and political autonomy.

The treaty was later re-signed between Balash and Vahan Mamikonian in Ctesiphon. Balash recognised all the feudal rights of the Armenian nakharars and soon appointed Vahan Mamikonian as the marzpan of Armenia. So, Balash administered Armenia with the aid of Vahan Mamikonian who, in fact, became the non-inaugurated King of Armenia with the absolute autonomy in the domestic policy. Soon, the Armenian nobility even helped Balash to settle down the rebellion rose by Peroz's other son, Zareh.

In the late 5th century and in the first half of the 6th century the Sassanids did not try to impose Zoroastrianism in Armenia since a religious gap had formed between the Armenian and Byzantine Churches at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The Armenian Apostolic Church did not participate in the Council of Chalcedon, because Armenia was in war with the Sassanids.

The Council defined that Christ had two natures in one person. The Armenian Church, along with several other ancient Oriental Churches, did not accept this change and declared that the new statement opposed the decisions of the previous ecumenical councils. This position was stated in the Council of Dvin in 506. Although the Byzantine Empire wanted Armenia to adopt the new concept, the Armenian Church maintained their Christological principles in the course of their whole history.

Additional information

The Armenian Apostolic Church and the other Oriental Orthodox Churches have been dishonestly blamed for monophysitism, which is a Christological position that Jesus Christ had only one - divine nature. However, it is unacceptable to call the adherents of the Oriental Orthodox Churches monophysits, as their Christological position is based on accepting the united one of divine and incarnated word of God, Jesus Christ.

As Aram I, the current Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia, states in his book, in the foundational Christological formula of "One Nature of the Incarnate Word" by Cyrill of Alexandria, "One nature" is used in a sense of "one person" composed of two natures - "Incarnate" (human or embodied in flesh) and "Word" (God or divine). Therefore, "One nature" is never interpreted in the Armenian Christology as a numerical one, but always a united one, which is far different from the principles of monophysitism.

Modern Oriental Orthodox communion constitutes of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (publicly known as the Indian Orthodox Church), comprising of 80-90 million followers worldwide.

Trying to finally abolish the feudal rights of the Armenian nobility in the Western-Armenian provinces, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I made administrative reforms in the 530s, which separated the lands of the Armenian nakharars. He even let the female members of the nakharar families have a part from their familiar holdings. This could make it possible to transform the Armenian holdings into Byzantine lands as the Armenian noble girls often married the Greek nobles. The Byzantine

Emperors also supported the process of conversion of the Armenian nobles to the Christology of the Council of Chalcedon, giving state positions to the converted nobles. This policy faced some opposition; the most significant revolt, led by the Arsacids, took place in 539. Eventually, the ethnic and religious transformation of the Western-Armenian provinces began to take place.

Additional information

At first, the Sassanids supported Nestorianism to weaken the role of the Armenian Church within their empire. The Armenian Apostolic Church, which at the time included the Georgian and Albanian Churches as well, was the only hierarchic Christian organization in the Sassanid Empire and was seen as the main instrument of the development of Christian communities within the borders of Persia. The Armenian Church, which was a significant element of the Armenian nakharar system, had a very important feature of full autocephaly. That is why the Sassanids always tried to weaken the Armenian Church.

But sometimes the Sassanid kings realised that they could use the dogmatic gap between the Armenian and Byzantine Churches, and did not restrict the activity of the Armenian Church. Anyways, they used to legalise Nestorianism as the only Christian branch in the Sassanid Empire.

Eastern Armenia maintained autonomy until the second half of the 6th century. Vahan Mamikonian's brother, Vard Mamikonian, succeeded his brother. Meanwhile, the Sassanids returned to their former policy of imposing Zoroastrianism and eliminating the autonomy of Armenia during the period of Khosrau (Khosrov) I the Anushirvan's reign (531-578). He made an administrative reform including Armenia into the Northern qoustak (province), and the Armenian marzpan was responsible

for the orders of the general governor of the qoustak. This meant that the status of Armenia was reduced, as the Sassanid king of kings would use the mediating aid of a general governor and would not manage the reign over Armenia directly.

In 564 Khosrau I appointed a Persian noble, Suren, the marzpan of Armenia, giving him the former privileges of marzpans. He began to increase tributes, manage administrative appointments and impose Zoroastrianism. This policy caused a new rebellion, led by Vardan Mamikonian the Junior. Suren and his troops were defeated by the rebelling nakharars in 571. This time the Byzantine Empire supported the rebellion, and a 20-year-war started between the two empires. The long-lasting war had devastating consequences for the Armenians as Armenia became a battlefield. Eventually, the war ended in 591, and Armenia was divided between the Sassanid and Byzantine Empires for the second time. The latter managed to gain a lot of new territories in Armenia, becoming the major geopolitical figure in the Middle East.

The endless wars at the beginning of the 7th century significantly weakened the Great Powers of the region. Realising the economic, military and political power of the Armenian nakharars (ishkhans), the Byzantine Empire recognized Davit Saharuni, a notable Armenian noble, *the Armenian Ishkhan* in the mid-630s. This appointment meant that Armenia got a higher political status than marzpanate, since the Armenian feudal hierarchy had somewhat regained its holistic structure with an Armenian noble on the top. However, Armenia had to face a new danger, the Arab conquests.

The newly formed Arab Caliphate defeated both the Byzantine and the Sassanid troops in the late 630s and became the most powerful state in the region. Teodoros Rshtuni (Theodore Rishtouni), the successor of Davit Saharuni, used this suitable situation to reunite the former Sassanid and Byzantine-ruled parts of Armenia in 639, and seriously strengthened the autonomy of Armenia. But soon, in 640, the First Arab invasion to

Armenia took place. The invasion had devastating results for the city of Dvin as 12 thousand inhabitants were assassinated and 35 thousand people were captured. The Arab invasions took place two more times in the following decade. As the Arab invasions were often interrupted by the Byzantine campaigns, Theodore Rishtouni decided to guarantee the autonomy of Armenia signing a treaty with Arabs.

Theodore Rishtouni went to Damascus and signed a treaty with Muawiyah, the Arab governor of Syria, in 652. According to the treaty, Armenia, in fact, recognized the Arab hegemony, at the same time maintaining autonomy. Armenia did not have to pay annual tribute during the next three years, and later they would pay as much tribute as they wanted. Armenia gained a right to keep a cavalry of 15 thousand soldiers which would be funded with the gathered tribute. Arabs agreed not to keep military bases in Armenia, but the Armenian cavalry could be used for the Caliphate needs as well. At the same time, Arabs undertook the protection of Armenia from the Byzantine invasions.

The treaty between Arabs and Armenians was met with great disappointment in the Byzantine Empire. The Emperor Constans II (641-668) organized a huge military campaign to Armenia in 653. To strengthen the Byzantine jurisdiction in Armenia, Constans imposed the Chalcedonian creed of Christianity. Following to the statements in the signed treaty, the Arabs moved their forces into Armenia to move out the Byzantine troops. Their continuous wars ruined a lot of settlements in Armenia.

Nevertheless, the situation became favourable when Muawiyah established the Umayyad Dynasty of the Caliphate in 661. Muawiyah I (661-680) re-established the treaty signed with Theodore Rishtouni, and the new Armenian Ishkhan, Grigor (Gregory) Mamikonian (661-685), in fact, reigned as a governor of an associated state of the Caliphate.

After the death of Muawiyah I, the Second Fitna, a period of general political and military disorder, took place in the Arab Caliphate until 692. Due to this occasion Armenia managed to stop paying tribute to the

Caliphate. This successful peaceful period was interrupted in the mid-680s, when Armenia faced the Khazar invasions from the North Caucasus. Then, Grigor Mamikonian was mortally wounded at the battle against the invaders.

Surpassing the political crisis, Arabs changed their tolerant policy, trying to strengthen their positions against the growing Byzantine influence. Both the Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate enforced their aggressive policy against Armenia at the end of the 7th century.

Finally, Arabs organised a decisive campaign; the Arab troops, led by Muhammad, the brother of Caliph Abd al-Malik (685-705), conquered Armenia, Georgia, and Caucasian Albania. Though they met a serious resistance from the local lords, they managed to succeed within a few years and establish their rule over the above mentioned areas.

The Caliphate formed a new administrative unit from the conquered countries in 701. The newly formed ostikanate (principality) was named Arminiya (Armenia) in recognition of the important role of Armenia in the region. The ostikan (general governor) had the same privileges as marzpan under the Sassanid rule. The Armenian nobility maintained their significant role with their economic and military power.

The Arab ostikan's first attempts to increase taxes and impose Islam faced great resistance. Nakharars decided to rebel against the Arab rule, when the Caliphate tried to use the Armenian cavalry for their own military needs. The feudal hierarchy, with the positions of the Armenian Ishkhan and sparapet on the top, was too strong to be an object of corrections by the invaders.

When the Arab troops wanted to capture the rebelling nakharars, the latter ones, led by Smbat Bagratuni, decided to fight. The battle took place in the winter of 703 near the town of Vardanakert in the Araks Valley. The Armenian cavalry attacked early in the morning, and the Arab troops, suffering from the cold, were not able to fight seriously. They

began to run to the River Araks to cross it but the ice broke and most of the soldiers drowned in the river. Some of the soldiers survived due to the kind act by the Armenian noble family of Kamsarakans, who took out hundreds of Arab soldiers from the cold river.

The news of rebellion and dramatic crush in the battle was a real shock for the Caliphate. The rebellion was enlarging its area, almost reaching Pan-Armenian character. So, the Caliph sent a large army to defeat the rebelling nakharars. The arrival of the Arab troops caused the decline of the rebellion. This “peaceful” end of the rebellion was too surprising. Unfortunately, two years later the Arab governor of Nakhijevan (Nakhitchevan) organized the massacre of about a thousand nobles, resulting in the weakening of the nakharar system.

For the next two decades Arabs did not overtake a risky policy to avoid new rebellion. However, Caliph Hisham (723-743) decided to make the influence of the Arab nobles and Islam strong in Armenia. He sent ostikan Hert, who organized a census and increased taxes. He set Jizya, which was a per capita tax paid by non-Muslims. Even the priesthood of the Armenian Apostolic Church had to pay tribute.

Later, a few Arab nobles and their tribes settled in Armenia, founding a number of emirates. These events and their consequences caused another rebellion in 748-750, led by the Mamikonians. In fact, the rebellion failed to have a real success. Nevertheless, local revolts took place in the following decades. The most significant one was led by Artstrunies in Vaspurakan, in 762, and was a reaction against the plunderer invasions by nomadic tribes from the territories of Atropatene, controlled by the Caliphate.

The largest rebellion against the Arab rule took place in 774-775. This was a Pan-Armenian rebellion since Mamikonians and Bagratunies collaborated to succeed. They managed to set control over the central territories of Armenia. After a number of successive battles, the rebelling

forces tragically lost the battle of Ardzni (April 24, 775), where the number of the Arab troops was six times larger than the Armenian forces.

Facing failures during the rebellions, the Mamikonians left the political arena of Armenia and moved to the Byzantine Empire. The Bagratuni family decided to maintain domestic autonomy, paying all the taxes set by Arabs. They tried to avoid any rebellion in order to restore the economic and military power of the country. This policy faced a lot of difficulties because a number of Arab nomadic tribes settled in the southern provinces of Armenia after the rebellion in order to guarantee the Arab rule in Armenia.

However, Bagratunies and their ally nakharars, Artstrunies, Syunies and lords of Artsakh, managed to overcome the difficulties. They became the de facto rulers of the country in the first half of the 9th century. What is very important, the Bagratunies enlarged their holdings, gaining lands in various parts of Armenia. They gained the title of *Ishkhanatz Ishkhan* ("the lord of the lords") which, actually, meant that the Bagratunies were the kings without crown.

The Bagratuni rulers of Armenia, Ashot (804-826) and his son Bagarat (826-851) did a number of administrative, military, and economic reforms to strengthen the autonomy of Armenia. Ashot Bagratuni moved his seat to the city of Bagaran, which would later become the first administrative centre of the Armenian Kingdom in 885.

Realising that Armenia, in fact, was becoming a sovereign state, Caliph Al-Mutawakkil (847-861) sent his representative, Abouset, to take the tribute. Bagarat Bagratuni did not let the Arab official enter the Armenian borders and gave the tribute straight on the border. This action meant that, in essence, Armenia announced a new rebellion and de facto declared the independence of the country. Taking these new conditions into consideration, the Caliphate organised a military campaign led by Abouset's son, Yusuf, who was soon assassinated by the rebel. Then, another general, Bougha, was sent to crush the nakharars.

The rebellion became a Pan-Armenian liberation movement, led by the Bagratunies and Artstrunies, even reaching neighbouring Eastern Georgia and lasting for more than five years (850-855). Finally, Al-Mutawakkil ordered his general Bougha to leave Armenia, as the Arab troops failed to defeat the rebellion. Ashot Bagratuni, the son of Bagarat Bagratuni, was recognised as the Armenian Ishkhan and Sparapet by the Caliph and, thus, became the ruler of the factually independent state.

The later development of the nakharar system took the path towards the recognition of the kingdom. All the classes of the Armenian society, including both rural and urban population, were dreaming of their own kingdom since they wanted to pay low taxes. Ashot Bagratuni began to organize the taxation of population without Arab lords and managed to cut taxes three times.

Ashot Bagratuni organised an army of more than 40 thousand soldiers. Moreover, nakharars were ready to collaborate for the re-establishment of the kingdom as they needed more autonomy.

The Armenian Apostolic Church took the role of uniting the nakharars to organise councils and elect the King of Armenia. The Council, organized by Catholicos Zakaria I Dzagetzi (855-876), took place in 869, electing Ashot Bagratuni to be the King of Armenia.

In 875 the last Arab ostikan, Ahmad ibn-Khalid, was deported from Armenia. Only 10 years later Caliph Al-Mu'tamid (870-892) sent a royal crown to Ashot Bagratuni and recognized him as the King of Armenia. So, Armenia regained the status of kingdom after a four-century period of the nakharar state system.

In conclusion, we can say that the period of the nakharar state system is a significant part of the history of Armenia. The nakharars always maintained the feudal state hierarchy, economic, and military power and, therefore, became political "giants". The smart policy, held by the Bagratunies, finally helped to re-establish the Kingdom of Armenia.

Assignment

Please, answer the following questions (600-900 words in sum).

1. Do you agree with Nicholas Adontz's concept of the nakharar state system? Explain your opinion.
2. In your opinion, what was the main achievement of the national liberation movements (450-451, 481-484) against the Sassanids?
3. What was the main goal of Justinian's policy? Why did he encourage women rights within the Armenian nakharar system?
4. What were the main reasons of the Arab conquest of Armenia? Explain the main features of the Arab rule.

TOPIC 4

The Bagratuni Kingdom of Armenia (885-1045 A.D.)

The Bagratid Dynasty and the reestablishment of the Armenian kingdom. The social, economic and political development of the kingdom. Foreign policy: the relations with the Byzantine Empire. The fall of the kingdom: the main issues.

After the reestablishment of the Kingdom of Armenia in 885, Ashot I Bagratuni (885-890) started to centralize the governing system of the state. He faced the climax of feudalism as it was at the top of its progress. He had already managed to create marital relationships with Syunies and Artstrunies, and these relations helped Ashot I to keep the balance within the former nakharar system.

In essence, the nakharar system still existed in Armenia, but there was a big difference – the position of the Armenian King was reestablished in the Armenian feudal hierarchy. So, we have a deal with quite a new political reality as the Armenian ishkhans became the vassals of the King, but had more jurisdictions than under the Arsacid dynasty.

Ashot I organized complementary foreign affairs. He considered the fact that the Arab Caliphate had political and military resources – the emirates in the Southern Armenia, and formally continued to be under the Arab hegemony. Simultaneously, Ashot established good relations with the Byzantine Empire.

Ashot I advanced to enlarge his hegemony over the territories laid under the Caucasus, including the holdings of Albanian king Hamam and Georgian prince Atrnerseh. According to the Byzantine Emperor and historian Constantine VII the Purple-born (913-959), the Arab Emirates of the Southern Armenia were the vassals of the Armenian King, too.

Additional information

In 867 Basil I (867-886) founded the Armenian (Macedonian) Dynasty (867-1056) in Constantinople and soon reorganized the Byzantine state system, rearranging the foreign policy. Strengthening his state, Basil planned to weaken the geopolitical role of the Arab Caliphate in the Middle East. He decided to support the policy of Ashot Bagratuni, based on his Armenian origin. Thus, good relations had formed between the Byzantine Emperor and the Armenian Ishkhanatz Ishkhan even before the reestablishment of the kingdom.

Stating that he was a representative of the Arsacids, Basil I asked Ashot Bagratuni to coronate him as the Bagratunies had held the gortsakalutyun of tagadir aspetutyun (the ministry of royal coronation) in the period of the Arsacid rule. Sending a royal crown to Basil I in 876, Ashot openly showed his independent foreign policy, and that was one of the real reasons why the Arab Caliphate avoided forceful steps against Armenia.

Ashot Bagratuni's foreign and domestic policy strengthened the newly re-established kingdom. He managed to leave a powerful state to his son, Smbat I (890-914), who continued his father's foreign policy, signing a trade treaty with the Byzantine Empire in 893. The treaty gave an opportunity to become a trade transfer zone between the Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate.

However, Smbat I decided to become kind of "a lord of lords", establishing vassal kingdoms. He also faced the invasion by the neighbouring Sajid Emirate of Atropatene after the treaty between Armenia and the Byzantine Empire had been signed. The situation became too unfavourable after a disastrous earthquake in Dvin in 893. Meanwhile, the decisive battle took place in 894 near the village of Doghs in Aragatsotn, where the aggressors were completely defeated.

The Emirate organised several new campaigns in the following four years. However, they understood that they should use the disagreements between the nobles and the King, instead of trying to fight.

Soon, a disagreement concerning the city of Nakhijevan started between the Artstrunies of Vaspurakan and the Syunies of Syunik. At first, the King solved the problem, giving the city to the Artstrunies, but later he decided to give the city to the Syunies. This case became a reason for Gagik Artstruni, the lord of Vaspurakan, to involve the Sajid Emirate in the process of solving the problem. Using these suitable conditions and gaining the approval of the Arab Caliph, the Emirate declared Gagik Artstruni the king of Vaspurakan. So, Smbat I faced a big problem; his country faced a terrible culmination of the feudal process that he could not overcome.

The late period of Smbat's reign was extremely tragic. The Sajids organized a military campaign to Armenia using the joint forces of some Armenian nobles. Finally, the Sajid emir Yusuf besieged Kapuyt (Blue) Fortress, where King Smbat I had taken refuge. Smbat I decided to surrender himself to Yusuf in hope of ending the Arab onslaught. However, Yusuf tortured Smbat I to death in 914 and put his headless body on display in Dvin, the largest city in Armenia.

After the death of Smbat I, Armenia became an area of chaotic wars between the Sajids with their allied Armenian nobles and prince Ashot with his supporters. Ashot succeeded in defeating the inner opposition, paying more attention to the foreign invaders. Gagik Artstruni realized his mistake and recognized Ashot II to be his lord, remaining "the king" of Vaspurakan.

In the end, Ashot II defeated Arabs at the battle of Lake Sevan in 921, claiming his influence within the country. He also signed a treaty with the Byzantine Empire to get its support against the Arab invasions. The Byzantine Empire wanted to weaken the Arab influence in the region, and that is why they tried to help Ashot to strengthen his position in

Armenia. In addition, the first Byzantine emperors of the Armenian Dynasty had still maintained their Armenian identity, which was an additional favorable condition for the rising collaboration between the two states.

The Arab Caliphate recognized Ashot II as “the shahanshah” (“the king of kings”) of Armenia in 922. Due to his strength of will and bravery against the rebellions and foreign invasion, Ashot II got the epithet “Yerkat” (“the Iron”). Eventually, his final years became a period of peace. Ashot II the Iron died in 928.

Abas, Ashot II’s brother, succeeded his brother to become the King of Armenia in 928. His reign was marked with peace, stability and thriving. Abas moved his capital to the city of Kars in the centre of his familiar holdings. He also forced Catholicos Anania I Mokatsi (Ananias I of Mokq, 946-968) to move his seat to the monastery of Argina, next to Kars. Thus, Abas made Kars the political, military, and cultural centre of Armenia. Abas died in 953.

Ashot III (953-977), the successor of the throne, decided to make the flourishing city of Ani the capital of Armenia. Though his reign started in 953, he organized his inauguration in 961, when Ani reopened its sights (beautiful churches, forceful fortifications, etc.) to visitors as the capital. The Armenian medieval historians describe this event as the reestablishment of the power of the Arsacid times.

Ashot III always took care of the poor and ill people, opening charitable institutions and hospitals for them, and that is why he was named Ashot the Merciful.

However, the establishment of vassal kingdoms, started in 908 with the case of Vaspurakan Kingdom, continued during Ashot’s reign. Moushegh Bagratuni, the younger brother of the King, was recognized the king of Kars by Ashot III in 963. Kars Kingdom managed to maintain good relations with the king of kings, recognizing the Bagratunies’ abso-

lute hegemony. Thus, the second vassal kingdom, after Vaspurakan, was formed in Armenia.

Ashot III was the first Bagratuni King of Armenia to face the Byzantine policy of the occupation of the Armenian lands. In 966 the Byzantine Empire occupied Taron, which was a familiar holding of a Bagratuni branch. The Emperor John I Tzimiskes (969-976) tried to use the suitable case of war with Arabs and enter Armenian territories, but Ashot III moved his army to the western borders of the country. The Byzantine Empire had to move out their troops since a military clash could have serious consequences for them. So, the Byzantine Empire began their policy of step-by-step occupying Armenia in the second half of the 10th century and imposed their policy in the first half of the 11th century.

Smbat II (977-990) continued his father's policy to make Ani larger and more beautiful. He built the second range of ramparts, strengthening the defense of the city. Both with its growing population and thriving trade, Ani became one of the most significant cities in the Middle East.

Smbat II completed the liberation of the Armenian lands from Arabs. Their last holding in Armenia was the Emirate of Dvin which was liberated and reunited to the Bagratid holdings in 987. The city became one of the most important political and trade centres in Armenia.

Though the Bagratuni Dynasty was at the top of their political, military, and economic strength at the period of Smbat's reign, two more vassal kingdoms formed. First of all, Smbat II recognized the Kingdom of Lori in 978, and then, the Kingdom of Syunik in 987. The first was founded by Gurgen, the King's brother, and the second one was established by Smbat Syuni. So, a new state system was formed within the Kingdom of Armenia. The system included the vassal kingdoms of Vaspurakan (908-1021), Kars (963-1065), Lori (978-1113), and Syunik (987-1170). The largest one was Vaspurakan with a territory of more than 40 thousand sq. km. and with a population of at least 1 million people.

Gagik I (990-1020) succeeded the throne after his brother's death. He enlarged the royal holdings, defeating several feudal nobles. For example, he defeated Davit (989-1048), the rebelling king of Lori, and only when Davit realized his mistake, Gagik I returned Davit's familiar holdings to him. Furthermore, he re-established his rule over the regions of Tsaghkotn and Kogovit previously controlled by the Artsrunies, and abolished the principality of Vayots Dzor next to the royal areas. He also managed to regain the control over the principality of Khachen in Artsakh. In addition, Gagik defeated the invasion by an Arab emir Mamlan in the battle of Tsumb, in 998.

Gagik's army included 100 thousand soldiers, a great power for those times. These forces helped him to keep away the Byzantine involvement into Armenia's politics.

The Byzantine Empire started their plan of final occupation of Armenia under the rule of Basil II (976-1025). The latter organized a campaign to Tayk province in 1001. Tayk was governed by Davit Kuropalates, who was of Armenian descent but a follower of the Byzantine (Greek) Orthodox Church. Both the Armenian and Georgian kingdoms claimed Tayk to be their province. However, Basil II occupied the province in 1001. Though a number of Armenian nobles went to meet the Byzantine Emperor, Gagik did not go there, showing that he was not a vassal of Basil II. The Tayk problem did not find its final solution even until the 1020s.

The policy of Gagik I was supported by Catholicos Sargis I of Sevan (992-1019), who was a significant figure in both the cultural and political life of Armenia. Gagik I and Sargis I built a lot of churches. The most notable one, the Cathedral of Ani, called "Katoghike′", was opened in 1001. The architect of the Cathedral was Tiridates, who also reconstructed the cupola of St. Sofia Cathedral in Constantinople. Indeed, the medieval sources often call Ani "a city of a thousand churches".

The economic development of the country was stable. Armenia was a trade centre in the Middle East. The country exported its craft and agricultural production to foreign states. There were more than a dozen large cities in Armenia, such as Ani, Van, Kars, Lore, Artzn, Dvin, Ardzhesh, Manazkert, Khlat, etc.

Gagik I died in 1020. His sons, Hovhannes-Smbat and Ashot, faced a disagreement upon the reign. The political crisis continued for about two years and finally found its solution after the involvement of sparapet Vahram Pahlavouni and the Georgian king, George I (1014-1027). Subsequently, Hovhannes-Smbat became the King of Ani, and Ashot IV got the eastern provinces of the kingdom. After Hovhannes-Smbat's death Ashot IV would become the king of the whole kingdom. So, the kingdom was divided into two parts. This event weakened Armenia and let the Byzantine Empire continue their occupation policy.

At the same time, the Seljuk invasions into the Middle East started. The first Armenian region to face the Seljuk invasions was Vaspurakan. At first, Seneqerim (1003-1021), the king of Vaspurakan, thought of defeating the invaders, but after the crush in 1016 he looked for a way to keep the Seljuks away. Basil II suggested Seneqerim to leave Vaspurakan for Sebastia (modern Sivas) in order to be protected. Seneqerim took thousands of people and left Vaspurakan in 1021. This devastating event became crucial for Armenia as the largest vassal kingdom became a part of the Byzantine Empire. The emigration of the population had crucial consequences, too.

Hovhannes-Smbat organized a poor foreign policy. When the Tayk problem was being discussed in Trapizon (modern Trabzon) Council in 1022, the Byzantine Empire forced Hovhanned-Smbat to make a shameful act; he signed a will, leaving the kingdom to the Empire after his death. This act was also enhanced by a few Armenian notable figures, including Catholicos Petros I Getadardz (Peter I of Armenia, 1019-1058).

Both Ashot IV and Hovhannes-Smbat died in 1041. The Byzantine Empire sent troops to Armenia to realize the statements of Hovhannes-Smbat's will. The troops were defeated by sparapet Vahram Pahlavouni, who supported Gagik II, Ashot IV's son, to become the King in 1042. He deposed and imprisoned pro-Byzantine nobles, including the famous official Vest Sargis, trying to maintain the sovereignty of the kingdom.

Gagik II (1042-1045) was an 18-year-old young man, so sparapet Vahram Pahlavouni always tried to help the King to govern in a stable manner. However, the Byzantine Empire continued their policy of making the will come true. They insisted on Gagik II paying an official visit to Constantinople to sign a treaty. By the time, Gagik had set Vest Sargis free, and the latter insisted on the importance of the King's visit to the Byzantine capital.

Vahram Pahlavouni tried to convince the King to stay in Armenia, but finally, Gagik II visited the capital of the empire in 1044. The Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) stated that Ani would be given to the Empire. Gagik II refused the offer of the Emperor, stating; "I am the lord of Armenia and I shall not give my country to you as you brought me here with a lie".

The Byzantine Emperor imprisoned Gagik II and sent an army to conquer Ani. The Armenian army, led by sparapet Vahram Pahlavouni, strongly defended the capital defeating five consecutive campaigns. The next campaign succeeded and the city opened its doors to the Byzantine troops in 1045. Thus, the Bagratid Kingdom of Armenia was finally occupied by the Byzantine Empire.

A number of Armenian noble families maintained their familiar holdings; for example, the kingdoms of Kars, Lori and Syunik recognized the hegemony of the Empire, maintaining their kingdoms.

The fall of the Bagratid Kingdom of Armenia was caused by both domestic and foreign reasons. The invading policy of the Byzantine

Empire and Seljuks made the Armenian nobles find ways to maintain their holdings. They were a part of the feudal society which was at the top of its development in Armenia.

The Seljuk invasions threatened the Armenian ishkhans and they looked for a way to avoid any war with the invaders.

Additional information

The Seljuk tribes were of the Turkic origin. They lived in the Altay region between Siberia and China. In the mid-tenth century, they united and started conquers led by Seljuk. Soon, their tribes were named after their leader. So, the Seljuk tribes conquered Middle Asia, Iran, and reached the Armenian borders at the beginning of the 11th century.

Having read the works by the medieval Armenian historians, for example, Aristakes of Lastiver (11th century), we can understand the ethnic psychology of the Armenian population in the 11th century. Nomadic tribes of the Seljuk Turks were too strange and scary for the natives; so Armenians faced a civilization that they had not seen before. For example, the medieval authors describe the strange clothes of the invaders that threatened the Armenian knights. Simultaneously, the Armenian sources tell us that in the late 10th century people were thinking about the upcoming apocalypse in the 1000th year of the birth of Jesus Christ (in 1001), or of the crucifixion of the Lord (in 1033). That is why all the nobles built churches, and, in addition, the geopolitical changes, especially the Seljuk invasions, were considered to be the signals and the features of the upcoming eschaton, the final event in the divine plan.

In the above mentioned conditions the Byzantine civilization, which included Greek, Armenian, Syriac, and other cultural elements, was considered by the Armenian authorities and society to be a Christian civilization that could save another Christian nation, Armenia. Although the Empire started their conquering policy in the second half of the 10th cen-

tury, the Armenian society was still too tolerable to them. The Armenian medieval authors even considered the Byzantine Empire the saver from the Seljuk invasions. These views caused psychological conditions that made Armenia defenseless against the Byzantine invasion.

Taking into consideration all above mentioned, we can conclude that the Bagratid reign (885-1045) was a period of a prosperous development of the Armenian state system, economy, and culture. However, that progress was interrupted because of the climax of feudalism, the policy of the Byzantine Empire, and the Seljuk invasions.

Assignment

Please, answer the following questions (600-900 words in sum).

1. How can you prove the theory that the re-establishment of the Armenian Kingdom by the Bagratid Dynasty was not by chance?
2. How can you describe the evolution of the relations between the Armenian Kingdom of Bagratids and the Byzantine Empire? What was the policy of the Arab Caliphate toward the Armenian Kingdom?
3. What were the main reasons of the fall of the Bagratuni Dynasty?

TOPIC 5

Armenia in the XI-XVII Centuries: Foreign Invaders and National Liberation Movement

The Byzantine policy in Armenia. The Seljuk conquest of Armenia and national liberation movement by the Zakarid (Zakarian) noble family (Georgia as the main ally). The Mongol conquest of Armenia and economic crisis. The Turkmen rule in Armenia. The formation of the Armenian communities abroad. The rise of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, and the conquest of Armenia. The demographic changes, and the national liberation movement. The partition of Armenia between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires (1639).

The Byzantine Empire had a policy of making a buffer zone in the Middle East. The zone would start from Georgia and Armenia and reach Mesopotamia. The zone would symbolize the borders of the Christian civilization in the East. This policy considered emigration of the Armenian nobles, with their vassal population, from Armenia to Asia Minor and imposed the Christian doctrine written at the Chalcedon Council. They hoped to make the region a simple Byzantine province to defend "the borders of Christianity" from the Seljuk invasions. As later it was clear, the policy, in fact, had quite the opposite result.

The Seljuk Turks invaded the territory of former Bagratid Kingdom in 1047. The Byzantine army left the Armenian settlements defenseless, and Seljuks understood that the Byzantine Empire was not so powerful in its Armenian provinces.

However, the Byzantine Empire continued its policy. Understanding the significant uniting role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the

Armenian society, the Empire called the Armenian Catholicos Petros (Peter) I to Constantinople and did not let him go back to Armenia. Moreover, they disorganized the Armenian cavalry, stating that it was taking too much money from the state budget. This political step made Armenia really defenseless against Seljuks as the Armenian forces could not fight seriously against the nomadic tribes without cavalry. At the same time, the Armenian ishkhans, especially the kings of Lori, Syunik, and Kars, maintained their military forces.

The Second Seljuk Campaign to Armenia took place in 1048. The Byzantine Empire decided to stop the Seljuk invasion. A number of Armenian nobles joined the Byzantine army. However, the allied army was not well-organized and could not defeat the invaders; so, Seljuks easily triumphed at the battle of Basen.

The next Seljuk invasion into Armenia was in 1054. They besieged Kars, trying to conquer the city. Though the campaign was not a great success, it caused devastating consequences for Armenia.

The decisive campaign was organized in 1064, led by Sultan Alp Arslan (1064-1072). Seljuks conquered most of the Armenian territories, including Ani. The kings of Lori, Kars, and Syunik recognized themselves as the vassals of the Seljuk Sultan. Alp Arslan gave the city of Ani to the Shaddadids, a family of Kurdish origin.

The Byzantine Empire decided to defeat the Seljuk Turks. They organized a huge campaign led by the Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (1068-1071). The decisive battle took place in 1071 in Manazkert (Manzikert). Seljuks defeated the Byzantine army and captured the Emperor. The Byzantine Empire had to sign a treaty, leaving vast territories to the Seljuk Empire.

The next Emperor, Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078), organized a new campaign in 1074 which was a worse failure, as the Byzantine

Empire had to leave Armenia and most of Asia Minor to Seljuks. Thus, Armenia became a part of the Seljuk Sultanate.

Eventually, the Byzantine policy in the Middle East was a failure that caused the weakening of the Christian civilization in the region as a large Muslim state gained hegemony in the Middle East.

Additional information

The medieval Armenian authors describe the Seljuk conquest as a terrible event in our history. They write about the psychological conditions of the lords and their vassal population who wanted to leave for territories ruled by a Christian state, the Byzantine Empire. So, emigration from Armenia to the Byzantine Empire, especially to the eastern provinces (Cilicia, Asia Minor, etc.) of the empire, became much larger than ever. Simultaneously, a number of nomadic tribes started to settle in a few regions of Armenia.

The geopolitical processes and migration even caused the change of the seat of the Armenian Catholicos. The seat was changed several times in the late 11th century and in the early 12th century, finally establishing in Hromkla (in Cilicia) in 1149. The new changes made it extremely important to call the head of the religious institution “the Catholicos of All Armenians”. The first Catholicos to hold this title was Barsegh (Basil) I of Ani (1105-1113).

A few Armenian principalities (Lori and Syunik kingdoms, Tornikian principality of Sasun, etc.) maintained their power in Armenia. However, they were losing their holdings step by step; for example, the last king of the Kars Kingdom, Gagik, left for Cilicia in 1065 as he could not defend his kingdom from the Seljuk invasions any more.

At the end of the 11th century and at the beginning of the 12th century, a few Muslim emirates formed in Armenia; the Shaddadids ruled in Ani, Shah-Armens (Ahlahshahs) – in Khlat (Southern Armenia), and the Gandzak Atabegs in the North-Eastern Armenia. The Armenian ishkhans often faced invasions by these emirates, losing large territories. Eventually, the Lori Kingdom was eliminated in 1113, and the Syunik Kingdom fell in 1170. The troops of the Atabeg of Gandzak not only conquered Baghaberd, the administrative centre of Syunik, but also burnt more than 10 thousand Armenian manuscripts there.

While Armenia was suffering from the Seljuk rule, the neighboring Georgia, which was a vassal of the Seljuk Sultanate, began to increase their economic, political, and military power. The state was ruled by a branch of the Bagratid family who wanted to enlarge their political and economic influence in the region by establishing a new state system which would include the former Bagratid holdings in Armenia. Georgian authorities found an ally, the Armenian nobles that left Armenia for Georgia. These nobles had some military power and had reached state positions in Georgia. They wanted to liberate their homeland, and considered Georgia, another Christian nation, to be their "natural" ally.

Georgia became a significant geopolitical figure in the region under the rule of David IV the Builder (1089-1125). He succeeded in moving Seljuks out of Georgia, winning the battle of Didgori in 1121. Later he organized a campaign to conquer Ani, the former capital of the Bagratid Kingdom of Armenia.

According to medieval Armenian and Georgian sources, the trade power of the native Armenian population gave them an opportunity to have city autonomy in Ani. When the Georgian troops besieged Ani in 1124, the inhabitants decided to support them. Then, the Shaddadid governor of Ani had to leave the city. Subsequently, the Georgian army entered the city, but soon faced a campaign organized by the neighboring emirates. The Armenian population and Georgian troops defended the

city for two years, but eventually, the city was returned to the Shaddadids. Ani was conquered by the Georgian troops two more times, but was later returned to the Muslim emirs in the 12th century.

The decisive campaigns to liberate the Armenian territories were organized in the late 12th century and in the early 13th century, when Georgia was ruled by Queen Tamar (1184-1207). So, this was the main period of the Armenian-Georgian alliance. Sargis Zakarian, an Armenian noble, was appointed as the amirspasalar (commander-in-chief) of the Georgian army in 1185. He became the main supporter of the Queen's policy, leading the next campaigns of liberation of Armenia. After his death, his sons became the major figures of the kingdom, leading the Georgian army during the campaigns against the Seljuk emirates. Zakare′ Zakarian, the elder son of Sargis Zakarian, became the amirspasalar of Georgia, and Ivane′ (Hovhannes) Zakarian, the younger son of Sargis Zakarian, became the atabeg (the preceptor and tutor of the successor of the throne).

The decisive campaign to liberate Armenian territories was organized in the 1190s. One of the most significant events was the liberation of Amberd, which was an important fortification in the defense system of both Ani and the Ararat Valley. Later the allies liberated Ani in 1199 and eliminated the Shaddadid Emirate. Soon, they liberated Dvin in 1203 and then most of North-Eastern Armenia. The Armenian population warmly supported the Christian army, and their support had a great significance for Georgia.

Nevertheless, the liberation of Armenia stopped at the end of the first decade of the 13th century, when the allies were defeated near the city of Khlat in Southern Armenia. As the Shah-Armen Emirate of Southern Armenia was included into the system of the Ayyubid Dynasty of Egypt, it became too difficult for the Georgian-Armenian forces to continue the liberation campaign.

Queen Tamar gave the liberated lands, except Kars, to the generals who led the liberation. Thus, North-Eastern Armenia became the holding of the Zakarians. They were the vassals of the Georgian throne but had real autonomy. The centre of Zakare's holdings was Ani, and Ivane's seat was Dvin. They also had their own vassal nobles; for example, Orbelians in Syunik, Proshians in Vayots Dzor, Hasan-Jalalians and Dopians in Artsakh, Vachutians in Aragatsotn. So, the Zakarian family established a feudal system, which was a part of the Georgian Kingdom but included a number of Armenian principalities at the same time. Sometimes this system caused transformation of the Armenian national feudal system, because a few Armenian nobles became adherents of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Even Ivane Zakarian became an adherent of the Georgian Orthodoxy, but Zakare Zakarian remained a follower of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In essence, this transformation had political reasons and took place for only a few decades.

The Zakarians tried to develop the economy of North-Eastern Armenia. The cities of Ani, Dvin, and Yerevan began to flourish, becoming important regional trade centres. The agricultural and craft production strongly increased.

However, the peaceful development of the country was interrupted in 1220, when Mongols invaded Armenia with an army of 20 thousand soldiers. They defeated the Georgian-Armenian army led by King George IV Lasha (1213-1223) and Ivane Zakarian at the battle of Khunan on the Kotman River, leaving the region with a great amount of war damage.

Mongols' next and decisive campaign took place in 1236-1244. They conquered not only the holdings of the Zakarians and their vassals, but also the Armenian lands under the rule of the Ayyubids and the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum.

The Mongol conquest of Armenia resulted in a disastrous situation; nomadic tribes converted farming areas into cattle-breeding lands,

destroying the economic conditions of traditionally agricultural areas of Armenia. A lot of people were killed in the wars, the economic situation was getting worse, and taxes became too much higher. As a result, huge emigration started from Armenia. The formerly founded Armenian communities abroad became larger, and even new colonies were established.

One of the most crucial results of the Mongol conquest was the decline of the Armenian ishkhans. Most of them lost their former power and had to leave for other countries; for example, Zakarians had to sell Ani in 1267 and leave their motherland.

The huge taxes, occasional invasions and resettlements of nomadic tribes started to destroy the traditional demographic picture of Armenia. The Armenian population suffered from the religious policy when Mongols converted into Islam; the taxes became higher for Christians.

So, the Mongol conquest was the beginning of a decline period in the history of Armenia. If previously we had a deal with the nakharar system in the 5-9th centuries, then we see declining noble families in the late 13th century. This disastrous event caused the weakening of military power of the Armenian ishkhans, eliminating the possibility of rebellions against the Mongol rule. However, sometimes (for example, in 1249 and 1259) the Armenian and Georgian nobles planned to rebel, but their attempts failed as the Mongol authorities prevented the upcoming revolts. Simultaneously, the loss of Armenian hereditarily feudal ownership meant the weakening of the homeland view.

Additional information

The Armenian medieval authors describe the decline in every sphere of the country. We can understand the negative transformation even by only taking into consideration the quality of the works by medieval historians of the 14-15th centuries. Their works lost the former complicated

structures, explanatory thoughts, and careful descriptions; most of them became simple chronologies which included only years (sometimes with dates) with shortly described events.

Armenia was under the Mongol rule until the end of the 14th century. The Turco-Mongol tribes led by Tamerlane (1370-1405) invaded Armenia in 1386. Their disastrous campaigns repeated for three more times, destroying Armenia. According to the Armenian historian of the 15th century, Tovma Metsopetsi (Thomas of Metsop), Tamerlane organized huge massacres in Armenia (especially in Syunik and Vaspurakan). Population organized defense in some regions but could not finally stop the occupants. Tamerlane's last campaign, organized in 1403, caused some diseases and starvation. He died in 1405, and his empire crushed. Armenia became a part of the Turkmen state of Karakoyunlu tribe, governed by the tribal leader, Kara-Yusuf. He declared himself to be "Shah-i-Arman" which meant "the King of Armenia".

The Karakoyunlu Turkmens ruled Armenia until 1468, when Akkoyunlus, another Turkmen tribe, dethroned the Karakoyunlus and established their rule over Iran, Armenia and the neighboring territories. The Akkoyunlu state was abolished in 1502, when their capital Tabriz was conquered by the Safavids of Iran.

Additional information

The period of Turkmen rule was a time of controversial political development. As we have already mentioned, the Holy Seat of the Catholicos of All Armenians was moved to Hromkla in 1149. Later it was moved to Sis in 1292.

Unfortunately, the Kingdom of Cilician Armenia fell in 1375 because of the campaign organized by the Egyptian Mamluks, and the Catholicoses suffered from the foreign rule. Most of Catholicoses were

poisoned in the upcoming several decades, and the religious leaders thought of reestablishment of the Holy Seat in Etchmiadzin. The reestablishment could unite the Armenian society within Armenia.

So, the reestablishment took place in 1441, when Catholicos Grigor (Gregory) IX (1439-1441) agreed to elect new Catholicos in Etchmiadzin without his presence because of his age. Kirakos Virapetsi (Kirakos of Virab, 1441-1443) was elected as the Catholicos of All Armenians. Gregory died in 1446, but his successor refused to recognize the legality of the elections in 1441, and a controversy took place resulting in the formation of the Holy See of Cilicia.

In fact, the Turkmen rule resulted in the continuation of emigration of Armenian people from Armenia and immigration of Turkic and Kurdish tribes into Armenia. A few Armenian principalities (Zeytun, Artsakh, Syunik, Sasun, etc.) maintained their autonomy. The Armenian nobles began to be called *meliks*. They had their own vassal population, troops, and holdings. The establishment of the Muslim feudal laws in Armenia, which had begun since the Mongol rule, caused disastrous crush of the traditional Armenian feudal society; traditional social institutions faced some challenges that changed the unitarily systematized and homogenous governing system in Armenia.

Religious authorities often tried to take some jurisdictions of secular authority to maintain and represent the Armenian national interests. Several religious leaders even organized military forces to defend their holdings and inhabitants; for example, the Sefedinians, a branch of Artstrunies, had holdings in the coastal regions of Lake Van including Aghtamar Island, and their military forces successfully defeated invasions by nomadic tribes. Representatives of the Sefedinian family had held the position of the Catholicos of Aghtamar since 1113, and they reached a great power in the middle of the 15th century. Catholicos Zakaria III (1434-1464) even wanted to re-establish the Armenian Kingdom; he was

first to organize military forces, and he tried to have good relations with the Turkem rulers as well. Moreover, Zakaria reached an agreement with Karakoyunlu leader Jhanshah (1437-1467) to enthrone his relative Smbat as the King of Armenia. In result, Stepanos IV, the successor of Zakaria III, enthroned King Smbat in 1465. The Armenian sources mention Smbat's name until 1471, writing nothing about any successor. So, this was just an attempt to re-establish the Armenian Kingdom, but Smbat's real jurisdiction reached not far from the coasts of Lake Van. Then, Armenian traditional feudal families continued to decline.

The climax of the decline period of the Armenian former state system came in the 16th century, when Armenia became an area of endless wars between the newly formed Safavid and Ottoman Empires. The former was formed during the 15th century and grew to become an empire in 1502, when the Safavids conquered the city of Tabriz, the capital of the Akkoyunlu Empire.

The Ottoman Empire was founded in 1299 in the Western Asia Minor. They enlarged their country, occupying vast territories, especially from the Byzantine Empire. The Ottomans finally conquered Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, in 1453. The fall of "the eastern capital" of Christianity was accepted within the Armenian society with great disappointment.

The Ottoman and Safavid empires became the major geopolitical figures in the Middle East at the beginning of the 16th century. They had to fight against each other to establish their hegemony in the region. Thus, their first war burst out in 1512 and two years later the Ottoman army crushed the Safavid shah Ismail I (1501-1524) at the battle of Chaldiran (near Lake Urmia).

The wars between the two empires lasted for more than a century, ending with the treaty of Zuhab in 1639. Armenia was eventually divided between the Ottomans and the Saffavids; Western Armenia became a part

of the Ottoman Empire, and a smaller part, Eastern Armenia, passed to the Safavid Persia. Later, Eastern Armenia became the basis for the reestablishment of the Armenian state in 1918.

Even during the period of the wars between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, Armenians wanted to raise liberation movement, and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin tried to organize it. For example, Catholicos Stepanos V of Salmast (1545-1567) managed to have meetings with the Pope, the authorities of Poland and Austria to discuss the possible ways to liberate Armenians, but no campaign was organized.

Since the fall of the Bagratid Kingdom, the Armenian population had begun to massively leave Armenia, establishing Armenian communities abroad. This process was vectored to the Byzantine Empire and Georgia in the 11th century. Then, the emigration of the Armenian population enlarged after the Mongol conquest of Armenia, reaching its climax during the period of the wars between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia. The Armenian communities in the Middle East continued to get thousands of new members. Moreover, a number of Armenian communities formed in Europe. So, this was the beginning of the formation of the Armenian diaspora, which would be finally formed after the Armenian Genocide.

To understand the devastating results of migrations, we should take into consideration their nature. If previously we mainly had a deal with Armenian emigration because of economic, cultural (including religious), and political reasons, then the Armenian people became an object of massive deportations. The most disastrous deportation took place in 1604, when the Persian King Abbas I (1587-1629) moved more than 350 (even 600) thousand Armenians from Armenia to Persia. Surely, this deportation caused the formation of new Armenian settlements (Nor Jugha) in Persia, but simultaneously, it caused the rapid change of the traditional ethnic composition of Armenia. In addition, a number of nomadic tribes of Turkic and Kurdish origin settled in Armenia. The Ottoman and

Safavid authorities held a specific demographic policy in Armenia. The Ottoman Turks managed to keep their policy of settling Turkic and Kurdish population in Armenia during the following centuries, eventually transforming their state demographic policy to genocide.

Taking into consideration all above mentioned, we can conclude that the absence of the Armenian state, the decline of the Armenian nobility, and the changes in the traditionally homogeneous ethnic composition of Armenia resulted in the change of "the borders" of historical Armenia as some parts of the former Kingdom of Greater Armenia started to lose their traditional Armenian nature. That is why the late medieval history of Armenia is sometimes called "A Decline Period" by scholars.

Assignment

Please, answer the following questions (600-900 words in sum).

1. How can you prove that the Byzantine policy made Armenia defenseless against the Seljuks?

2. How can you describe the evolution of the Armenian-Georgian alliance?

3. What were the main issues of the formation of the Armenian communities abroad?

4. In your opinion, what were the main results of the partition of Armenia between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires?

TOPIC 6

The Armenian State of Cilicia (1080/1198-1375 A.D.)

Early Armenian migrations to Cilicia. The Rubenid Dynasty: from principality (1080-1198) to kingdom (1198-1375). Foreign policy and the Crusades. The Hetumid Dynasty: the Armenian-Mongol alliance and the Egyptian Mamluks. Religion, and the policy of Latinizing the Armenian Church in Cilicia. The Lusinian Dynasty and the fall of the kingdom. Cilician Armenian society.

Cilicia is a geographical region in the south-eastern part of Asia Minor. The Mediterranean Sea washes the southern coasts of Cilicia. The territory of Cilicia includes two main geographical areas; Cilicia Trachea (Mountainous Cilicia, North-Eastern Cilicia), and Cilicia Pedias (Plain Cilicia, South-Eastern Cilicia). Cilicia was an international trade centre since the Ancient times, and a number of prosperous cities grew there; for example, Tarsus, Sis, Mamestia, Anavarza (Anazarbus), Adana, etc.

The Armenian community in Cilicia started its history at least at the reign of Tigranes II the Great (95-55 B.C.), King of the Artaxiad Dynasty in Armenia. He conquered most of the territory of the province, establishing military and trade presence of Armenians in Cilicia. Later on the communities became larger and larger, reaching a great number in the 11th century when the Bagratuni Kingdom of Armenia lost its sovereignty. A lot of Armenian nobles, including King Gagik II Bagratuni and King Gagik of Kars, settled in Cilicia; King Gagik of Kars even brought with him a part of the population of his former kingdom. Not only a part of the nobility left Armenia for Cilicia, but also thousands of people made Cilician cities their settlements. Therefore, Armenians became the ethnic majority in Cilicia. Some Greek, Assyrian, Arab and Jewish population also existed in Cilicia.

As a result of ongoing immigrations, a number of Armenian principalities formed in Cilicia in the second half of the 11th century. At first, they were the vassals of the Byzantine Emperor and had Byzantine titles. One of the most significant nobles that established a principality in Cilicia and neighboring territories was Pilartos Varajnuni (Philaretos Brachamios). The administrative centre of his holdings was Marash. Another Armenian ishkhan, Oshin of Gandzak, established his principality in the castle of Lambron. However, most of the Armenian principalities, facing Byzantine and Seljuk invasions, lost autonomy.

The most powerful Armenian principality that maintained autonomy and later elevated to the status of kingdom was founded by Ruben I in 1080. His holdings included only three fortifications when he declared his autonomy but later he enlarged the territories reaching the final goal; Ruben established the Rubenid Dynasty leaving the throne to his son, making his principality a hereditarily governed and long-lasting state. Though Ruben I (1080-1095) recognized the hegemony of the Byzantine Empire, he and his successors wanted to enlarge their jurisdiction and holdings. The Byzantine Empire had to strongly oppose the rise of the Armenian state to maintain their rule in Cilicia. Sometimes they gave some titles to the Armenian ishkhans, or organized military campaigns to crush the rising principality.

Constantine I (1095-1100), the son of Ruben I, faced a new challenge; the Crusades started in 1096. He had to focus on the problem of foreign affairs in order to organize strong defense. The Crusaders joined “the club” of Cilician neighbors, along with the Seljuk emirates and the Byzantine Empire. Constantine decided to help the Crusaders, considering them as Christian allies. However, the Crusaders sometimes tried to conquer cities ruled by the Armenian nobles. For example, the Crusaders established their first state in Edessa in 1098, when Baldwin poisoned his stepfather, the Armenian noble Toros, who was the lord of Edessa. So, the first Crusade state was formed in the lands ruled by a Christian noble.

Constantine I managed to strengthen his principality conquering the castle of Vahka in the Mountainous Cilicia in 1098. The castle became the administrative and military centre of the Rubenid Dynasty.

The foreign relations of Cilician Armenia became more complicated during the reign of Toros I (1100-1129) who had to move out the Seljuk and Byzantine forces from several Cilician cities. He conquered the cities of Sis and Anavarza in 1104 from the Byzantine Empire and then defeated the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, the northern neighbor of Cilician Armenia. These victories let Toros I rule the country with greater autonomy.

Levon I (1129-1137), the son of Toros I, continued to enlarge his state and moved out the Crusaders from the Plain Cilicia. The Byzantine Emperor John II Komnenos (1118-1143) understood that the Rubenid principality was becoming more and more powerful and decided to organize a decisive campaign to the Cilician Armenia. His campaign started in 1137, resulting in a short-time loss of the Rubenid authority in Cilicia; Levon I and two of his sons were captured to Constantinople.

However, Toros II, the son of Levon I, managed to escape from the Byzantine capture and returned to Cilicia. He carefully organized a liberation movement against the Byzantine troops reestablishing the Rubenid principality in 1145. This event became very important in the history of the Armenian state in Cilicia, since facing several other losses later on, the Byzantine Empire understood that the Rubenid Dynasty had taken the course of establishing their kingdom in the region.

Toros II (1145-1169) organized an army of at least 30 thousand soldiers. The economy of the country flourished, and the agricultural production reached great amounts. So, the reign of Toros II was a period of political, economic, and military growth. The Holy Seat of the Armenian Apostolic Church was transferred to Hromkla in 1149, establishing the religious jurisdiction of the Armenian Church in Cilicia.

Mleh succeeded his brother, Toros II, ruling the principality in 1169-1175. He moved the administrative centre to Sis in 1173, and Sis continued to be the capital of the Cilician Armenia until the fall of the Armenian Kingdom in 1375.

Mleh continued his brother's policy to strengthen his authority in the region. To reach his geopolitical goals, he started to establish good relations with the neighboring Muslim states. This policy faced a great opposition by the Crusaders, the Byzantine Empire, and even some of the Armenian nobles and bishops. The historical psychology of the period implied that Christian states should collaborate with each other, and it seemed strange that Mleh decided to cooperate with the Muslim states. Then, Mleh was killed by a group of traitors.

The Cilician Armenia continued stable development during the reign of Ruben II (1175-1187). His foreign policy kept balance between the Christian and Muslim neighbors, and he succeeded in making good relations with both of them.

However, the peak of the power of the Armenian state in Cilicia came in the late 12th century when country was ruled by Levon II (1187-1198 as ishkhan (prince), and 1198-1219 as the King). Levon II became ishkhan in the period when the Crusaders and Egyptian Ayyubids were fighting for Jerusalem. The winner would gain hegemony in the region, and it was too difficult for the Armenian ishkhan to regulate foreign affairs in such conditions. Finally, the Crusaders lost Jerusalem in 1187, and later the Egyptian Sultan Salah ad-Din (Saladin, 1174-1193) had a plan of moving out all the Crusaders from the region.

Though Cilician Armenia had a neutral position in these processes, Salah ad-Din wanted to conquer this country as well. However, he suddenly died in 1193 and his plan was canceled. Some modern European scholars state that Egypt wanted to crush Cilicia just because of the Christian origin of the state. However, in this case we have a deal

with trade “competition” as Cilician port Ayas was becoming the centre of the sea trade in the Eastern Mediterranean region, outcompeting the Egyptian Alexandria.

Levon II had a project of reestablishing the Armenian Kingdom, according to which Cilicia would become the location of the Armenian sovereign state. To make his wish come true, Levon II managed to complete several political steps; he made guaranteed defense system (signing treaties with both the Crusade state of Antioch and the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum), crushed competing noble families (especially the Hetumids of Lambron), reorganized the state system (establishing ministries and royal court), signed trade treaties with partner ports (especially with Genoa, Venice, and Florence), sponsored the development of the arts and the whole cultural life (establishing royal patronage), and published royal coins (with a writing, stating that he is the King of Armenia). The culmination of his reign was the royal consecration on January 6, 1198 in Tarsus. Due to his diplomatic talent, both the Byzantine Empire and the Holy Roman Empire (Germany) recognized Levon II as the King of Cilician Armenia. So, Levon II started to be called King Levon I.

The newly established kingdom covered a territory of approximately 50 thousand sq. km., making it the largest Christian state in the region. King Levon I wanted to establish a larger Christian state in the Eastern Mediterranean region, and therefore he wanted to start with a dynastic marriage between the ruling families in Cilician Armenia and the Crusade Principality of Antioch; the newly born son would become the King of the united kingdom of Cilicia and Antioch. Although Levon I managed to conquer Antioch in 1216, he failed to realize his plans of the establishment of a united kingdom.

King Levon I died in 1219, leaving a flourishing country to his successors. His legacy is appreciated so greatly in the history of the Armenian nation, that he is often called Levon I the Magnificent.

Since Levon I did not have a son, he appointed his little daughter Zabel (Isabella) as the royal successor. In those conditions there was a great problem to be solved; the Armenian nobles had to find politically and personally suitable husband for Zabel not to lose the achievements reached by Levon I.

At first, the council of nobles decided to marry Zabel to Philip, the prince of Antioch. They got married in 1222, and Philip became the King of Cilician Armenia. He promised to respect the Armenian jurisdiction and not to Latinize the country. The marriage was set to reach the goal of King Levon I - the establishment of a united kingdom of Cilicia and Antioch. However, Philip ignored his promise and brought a number of Catholic priests and nobles into the Armenian government.

The Armenian nobles, led by Constantine Gundstabl (Constable, commander-in-chief), arrested Philip in 1224, and organized another council to find a new husband for Zabel. Eventually, they decided to organize marriage between Zabel and Hetoum, the son of Constantine Constable. They got married in 1226, and Hetoum I (1226-1270) established a new dynasty in the Cilician Armenia. The Hetoumid Dynasty ruled the kingdom until 1342.

Hetoum I was a young boy, and, in fact, the kingdom was ruled by Hetoum's father, Constantine Constable. The King's elder brother, Smbat, later became the commander-in-chief of the Armenian army. He was also a great knower of laws and the contemporary historical evidence; he wrote "Datastanagirk" ("Book of Law"), a collection of canonic and civil laws that helped the Armenian Kingdom to make their jurisdiction clear. Smbat supported Hetoum in the foreign affairs as well.

Hetoum's peaceful reign was interrupted in the middle of the 13th century, when Mongols started their invasion into the Middle East. The Armenian Kingdom had to either fight agaist them or to make them allies. So, Hetoum I decided to sign a treaty with Mongols. The latter ones had

conquered Middle Asia, Iran, Armenia, Georgia, and had reached the borders of Cilician Armenia, planning to defeat even the Egyptian Mamluks. Mongols wanted to find a reliable ally against Egypt, and Cilician Armenia was very important for them; Cilician port of Ayas had become a real trade opponent to Alexandria, and Mongols could use the port to enlarge their trade potential and, at the same time, crush the trade power of the Egyptian economy. The collaboration between Mongols and Armenian Cilicia was warmly supported by the European states as they wanted to convert Mongols from paganism to Christianity, establishing a powerful alliance against Egypt.

However, the Kingdom of Cilician Armenia just wanted to maintain peace and to support the development of the country. That is why Hetoum I decided to send his brother, Smbat, to Karakorum, the capital of the Mongol Empire. Smbat organized some negotiations with the Mongol authorities in 1253 and reached an agreement, according to which Mongols would not invade Cilicia, and Hetoum I would go to Karakorum to sign the treaty with Mongke (1251-1259), the Supreme Khan of Mongols.

Hetoum I made his official visit to the Mongol capital signing a treaty with Khan Mongke in 1254. According to the signed agreement, the two states would help each other in case of war. The Cilician traders could freely organize their trade in the whole territory of the Mongol Empire, which covered an area of about 30 million sq. km., a huge territory to get high profits from trade. This treaty helped Ayas outcompete Alexandria, becoming the major port in the Eastern Mediterranean region, simultaneously making Cilicia “a natural enemy” of Egypt.

Mongols had a project to establish their rule in the whole Middle East; however, they failed facing serious military actions by Mamluks. The latter ones organized a massive campaign to the Cilician Armenia in 1266, reaching Sis, the capital of the country. The Armenian army failed to stop the foreign invasion; Mongols did not manage to help their allies, and that was the first “crack” in the Armenian-Mongol alliance.

Levon II (III), the son of Hetoum I, succeeded the throne in 1270, reigning until 1289. His rule was a peaceful period of balanced relations with the neighboring states. After his death, when the country was ruled by Hetoum II (1289-1305), the situation dramatically changed; the Egyptian Mamluks decided to finally crush the Armenian state, and Mongols lost their former power. So, the Armenian Cilicia needed to reorganize the foreign policy to guarantee the security of the kingdom. The reorganization became more relevant when Mongols adopted Islam, and the Armenian authorities thought of a new, Christian ally.

The geopolitical conditions in the Middle East changed at the end of the 13th century; Mongols lost their former power, and the Crusaders lost Acre, their final point in Levant, in 1291. Soon, the Egyptian army organized a devastating campaign to Cilicia in 1292, conquering and destroying the castle of Hromkla, the Holy Seat of the Catholicos of All Armenians. The Catholicos was captured.

Later the Mamluk pressure on Armenian Cilicia became stronger, and a party of pro-European figures formed, who wanted the Pope to organize a new Crusade to Levant. This party was named Unitarian as they were ready to adopt Catholicism in order to get a new ally. Even though a lot of nobles joined this “club”, this party did not gain real support from the society.

Oshin (1307-1320) became the King in such conditions when Cilicia would finally leave the Armenian-Mongol alliance as Mongol general Pilarghu had killed King Levon III (IV, 1303-1307). As the Armenian authorities often asked the Pope to organize a new Crusade, the head of the Roman Catholic Church wanted the Armenian Apostolic Church to adopt Catholicism and become a part of the Catholic Church. The problem of the unification of the churches was discussed in the Councils of Sis (1307) and Adana (1317). Though the authorities decided to accept the offer of their European partners, the population refused to accept the decision of their authorities, organizing protests in the major cities.

A new Crusade to Levant was never organized. Simultaneously, Mamluks organized several new campaigns to Cilicia, conquering and destroying their trade rival Ayas in 1322.

Eventually, the Hetumid Dynasty was interrupted after the death of Levon IV (V, 1320-1342). Thus, the family of Lusinians (Lusignans, partially of a French origin, and a Hetumid branch by mother) ruled the country in 1343-1344, and then another branch of the Hetumids reigned in 1344-1373. Mamluks used the political crisis in Cilicia and continued their aggressive policy against the Armenian state.

Realizing that a new Crusade would never be organized, Catholicos Mesrop I of Artaz (1359-1372) organized the Council of Sis in 1361 to finally solve the problem of union. The Council declared that the Armenian Apostolic Church would maintain autocephaly and would not be Latinized. The political authorities took into consideration the decisions of the Council and tried to find some points of partnership with Mamluks. For example, King Constantine (1344-1362) tried to establish good relations with Egypt, but it was too late as Mamluks had already occupied the Plain Cilicia and decided to eliminate the Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia.

King Levon V (VI, 1373-1375) Lusignan had to face the final and crucial campaign of Mamluks who, in result, conquered most of the territory of the Armenian Kingdom. The besieged city of Sis could strongly defend itself for over a year, but eventually the city fell on April 16, 1375. The last Armenian King was captured by Mamluks, and Cilicia became a part of Egypt. Later Levon V was set free and settled in France where he died in 1393. We can find his tomb in France; there is an inscription on the tombstone in French; “Here lies the right noble and excellent Prince Leon de Lusignan V, Latin King of ***the Kingdom of Armenia,*** who passed away in Paris on the 29th day of November of the year of Grace 1393. Pray for him”.

The history of Armenian state in Cilicia is an interesting and very important part of Armenian history. It shows a beautiful example of how an Armenian community abroad could maintain national identity, evaluate the main features of the traditional feudal society, and organize their own kingdom far from the motherland.

Assignment

Please, answer the following questions (600-900 words in sum).

1. How can you prove that the Kingdom of Cilicia was of the Armenian origin?

2. How can you describe the evolution of the Armenian state in Cilicia (from principality to kingdom)?

3. In your opinion, what was the main role of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in the history of Armenian civilization?

4. How do you evaluate the Armeno-Mongol alliance? Was it a diplomatic failure or an achievement?

5. In your opinion, can we consider Cilicia's pro-western foreign policy as not proven?

6. What were the main reasons of the fall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia?

TOPIC 7

The Armenian Culture in the Middle Ages

The invention of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots, and the Golden Age of the Armenian culture. The development of the Armenian culture in the Bagratid Armenia and the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. The Armenian culture in the late Middle Ages.

The early Middle Ages were a period of the rise of the Armenian culture. It was deeply connected to the invention of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots in 405 A.D. Due to the fast development in all the fields of culture, scholars called the 5-7th centuries as the Golden Age of the Armenian culture.

Who was Mesrop Mashtots? What was the goal of the invention of the Armenian alphabet? What was Mesrop Mashtots' mission? Why did he think of inventing an Armenian writing system?

To answer above mentioned questions, we need to look through the pages of the history of Armenia at the end of the 4th century; Armenia was parted between the Roman and Sassanid Empires in 387, losing former geopolitical role in the region. Armenians needed some new tools to maintain national identity after those geopolitical changes. Furthermore, there were still some regions in Armenia with pagane population since the divine service was held mainly in Greek and people did not understand it. So, people wanted to understand the Christian doctrine better; the Armenian Apostolic Church needed the final step of Nationalization, and the process was organized by Mesrop Mashtots.

Mesrop Mashtots was born in the village of Hatsekats, in the region of Taron, in 361. Later he became an archimandrite of the Armenian Church. When Mesrop Mashtots was sent as a missioner of Christianity to the region of Goghtn, where a part of population was still pagan, he

understood that Armenians need their own alphabet so that the population could read the Holy Bible in Armenian and clearly understand it. He told about his thoughts to Catholicos Sahak Partev (387-439), who organized a meeting with King Vramshapuh (388-414). Both the Catholicos and the King realized the importance of the Armenian alphabet, and sent Mesrop Mashtots to Amid and Edessa to take advice from their scholars. Spending several months in those cities, Mashtots finally invented the Armenian alphabet in 405.

Soon, Mesrop Mashtots returned to Armenia where he was warmly met in Vagharshapat (Etchmiadzin). King Vramshapuh and Catholicos Sahak Partev helped Mashtots to open Armenian national schools and teach Armenian. Mesrop Mashtots even managed to open Armenian schools in Western Armenia which was under the Byzantine rule. When he had already got a group of well-educated students, he organized the translation of the Holy Bible from Greek into Armenian.

The translation was so brilliant that it is usually called “the Queen of Translations”; the book still has the biggest amount of words (approximately 110 thousand different words) among all the books in Armenian. So, Armenians were among the firsts to translate the Bible into their national language. In contrast, we can see that the European nations thought of the translation of the Bible from Latin into their national languages only one thousand years later; John Wycliffe was the early European advocate for translation of the Bible from Latin (into English) in 1382-1384.

Mesrop Mashtots, Sahak Partev and their students organized the translation of a number of Christian books, and even Ancient Greek and Latin authors that would help to enlarge the world view of the Armenian civilization. Moreover, some works by ancient Greek authors maintained through ages only in Armenian; for example, “Chronicon” by Eusebius of Caesarea is entirely preserved only in Armenian. The Holy Translators not only translated the Holy Bible and other Christian books but also

wrote a lot of songs for Divine Liturgy. So, Armenian people could attend divine service and understand all the ideas in Armenian. The main figures of the Golden Age of the Armenian civilization, Mesrop Mashtots, Sahak Partev and their students, were canonized by the Armenian Apostolic Church, and three holidays are devoted to them; the main holiday, the Feast of the Holy Translators, is celebrated in the period between October 3 and November 7.

In fact, the acts of the Holy Translators constructed a real national project – the transformation of the model of the Armenian civilization, considering the nationalized Christian culture as the basis of national identity.

Additional information

To understand the long-term importance of the actions of Mesrop Mashtots and the Holy Translators through the centuries, we can just look at the fact that fifteen centuries later only two nations, Armenians and Georgians, used an alphabet different from the Latin and Cyrillic writing systems in the former Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Mesrop Mashtots died in 440, when Armenia had already lost the status of kingdom. However, Armenians had gained an instrument to maintain their national identity through the centuries – the Armenian written culture. It is not by chance that the Armenian alphabet has been considered to be given by God, as the Armenian nation realizes the holy importance of the alphabet. Mesrop Mashtots was buried in Oshakan, 25 km far from modern Yerevan.

Schools: As we have already mentioned, Mesrop Mashtots was first to open Armenian schools. Education began to be held in Armenian, and students studied Greek and other foreign languages as well. The Arme-

nian Apostolic Church became the institution that held the Armenian education, making it a multilaterally developed and well organized mixture of both national and global mindedness.

The system of education became more complicated in the 9-13th centuries; elementary and high schools were introduced. The latter ones firstly were called *vardapetarans* (seminary of archimandrites), but starting from the 11th century people started to call them *hamalsarans* (universities); Ani (11-12th centuries), Nor Getik (New Getik, 12-13th centuries), Gladzor (13-14th centuries), Sis (12-14th centuries), and Tatev (14-15th centuries) had very good universities that "produced" hundreds of brilliant priests and scholars.

Gladzor University was funded by Proshyan and Orbelian noble families. A number of brilliant scholars, including Hovhannes Imastaser (John the Philosopher) in Ani, Mkhitar Gosh in Nor Getik, Nerses Mshetsi (Nerses of Mush) in Gladzor, Nerses Lambronatsi (Nerses of Lambron) in Sis, and Grigor Tatevatsi (Gregory of Tatev) in Tatev, were among the teachers of the universities.

The late medieval became a period of decline of the Armenian universities, and the Armenian Apostolic Church could hardly maintain Armenian schools in the communities - in the villages and cities. However, even in such kind of conditions there were several individuals who worked hard to maintain and develop Armenian schools; for example, Movses Tatevatsi (Moses of Tatev, 16-17th centuries) founded a school in Yerevan and a few years later another one in Hovhannavank (about 30 kilometers north-east from Yerevan).

Historiography: Mesrop Mashtots and Sahak Partev left many well-educated students who continued their teachers' mission. Following the Greek tradition, they founded Armenian historiography, making Armenia the eastern border of the Classic Historiography; Agathangelos wrote about the adoption of Christianity, Koryun described the invention of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots, Yeghishe (Elishe) carefully

explained the reasons, process and results of the Armenian rebellion against the Sassanid rule in 450-451, etc.

Undoubtedly, Movses Khorenatsi (Moses of Khoren) is the greatest Armenian historian of the 5th century. Being one of Mashtots' best students, he was the first Armenian historian to write the holistic history of Armenia, starting from the ancient times and finishing with the fall of the Arsacid Dynasty in 428, and the death of his teachers, Mesrop Mashtots and Sahak Partev.

Additional information

"History of Armenia" by Moses of Khoren includes three body parts and conclusion. The first part describes the history of Armenia from the times of the ancestor Hayk to the last representative of his family. The second part tells us about the times of Orontids and first Arsacids. The third, final part describes the period of the Christian Arsacid kings.

Though Moses of Khoren completed his work more than half a century after the fall of the Arsacid Dynasty in Armenia, he stopped his "History of Armenia" with the fall of the Arsacids as he had state-centered political views.

Actually, his world view was so large that he even had information about the lands from Britain and North Africa to China and India. Sometimes he writes some contrasting facts, puts out arguments and counter-arguments, and finally chooses only one from them, finding more reliable sources and arguments; so, he acts like a modern scholar of the 21th century who chooses only the most reliable and evaluated facts and ideas. Therefore, he was a great historian whose work was a real text-book of History of Armenia until the 19th century.

Medieval Armenian historiography continued its development after Moses of Khoren as well; Ghazar Parpetsi (Lazar of Parbe) wrote about the rebellion of Vahan Mamikonian in the late 5th century, Sebeos described the Arab invasions in the 7th century, etc.

The Armenian historiography reached a new level in the 9-13th centuries, keeping the traditions of the Classic historiography. Simultaneously, several new genres of historiography formed; Stepanos Taronetsi (Stephen of Taron, Asoghik, 11th century) and Constantine Archimandrite (13th century) wrote "ecumenical" histories describing the history of Armenia and neighboring countries, Tovma Artstruni (10th century) and Stepanos Orbelian (13-14th centuries) wrote regional history of Vaspurakan and Syunik respectively.

Armenian historiography started to decline in the 14th century, turning into simple chronologies and annals. However, there were a few authors that tried to write their works in the Classic traditions; for example, Arakel Davrizhetsi (Arakel of Tabriz, 17th century) wrote about the devastating consequences of the wars between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires for Armenia, focusing on the massive deportation organized by the Persian King Abbas I.

Philosophy: The Holy Translators made a number of translations of the works by ancient Greek philosophers – Aristotle, Plato, Porphyry, etc. Moreover, there were several famous Armenian philosophers even before the Golden Age. For example, Paruyr Haykazn won a competition of philosophers and got his lifetime statue in Rome in the 4th century, before the invention of the Armenian alphabet.

Afterwards, philosophy became more and more developed; Yeznik Koghbatsi (Eznik of Kolb) and Davit Anhaght (David the Invincible) were the major figures of Armenian philosophy in the 5th century. The first one was among the Holy Translators of the Golden Age, and his "Against the Sects" is a philosophical and theological book against Zoroastrianism, pagan beliefs and heresies. His main goal was to persuade that

Christianity is a more progressive religion than Zoroastrianism; the Sassanid Empire wanted to convert Armenians into Zoroastrianism, and that is why a philosopher like Eznik of Kolb had to write an ideological book against the Sassanid pressure.

Davit Anhaght is the first representative of the Medieval Armenian non-religious philosophy, being a member of Neo-Platonic school. His most popular work is "The Definition of Philosophy". His philosophical skills were famous especially in Alexandria.

We can see the development of philosophical views in the works of not only philosophers but also scientists (for example, Anania Shirakatsi (Ananias of Shirak), 7th century), historians (Elishe, 5th century), poets (Grigor Narekatsi (Gregory of Narek), 10-11th centuries), etc.

In addition, Armenian philosophical views developed in the 11th century. Hovhannes Imastaser became one of the most important figures of the medieval Armenian philosophy; he even developed critical thinking skills in the University of Ani, leaving a great number of students.

Although the Armenian culture suffered from the political and economic difficulties in the 14-17th centuries, we had several brilliant philosophers including Hovhannes Vorotnetsi (14th century) and Grigor Tatevatsi (Gregory of Tatev, 15th century).

Literature: Historiography was the main branch of literature in the early medieval; the Armenian historians of the 5th century used some creative and poetic details in their historiographical data. For example, Elishe has a brilliant poetic writing style which makes his work more attractive and interesting. The works by the medieval Armenian historians are also important sources for their content of national epic literature; for example, Moses of Khoren presents a pagan hymn devoted to Vahagn, the god of war.

Mesrop Mashtots, Sahak Partev and their students were also noted for their *sharagans*, songs sung in masses. Later, Catholicos Komitas Mamikonian (615-628) and Catholicos Nerses IV the Gracious Pahlavuni (1166-1173) wrote a number of sharagans that are still used in the Armenian Church.

The Arab conquest of Armenia and rebellions against the Arab rule left great influence on the world view of the Armenian people, and the epos of "Sasna Tsrer" ("David of Sasoun") reached its culmination, becoming an orally told and carefully evaluated work in the 9th century. The national epos gained its written form only in the late 19th century when Bishop Garegin Servandztian wrote down the oral tradition.

Some new branches of the Armenian literature developed in the Middle Ages; for example, orally told fables began to be developed by professionals. Mkhitar Gosh (12-13th centuries) and Vardan Aygektsi (Vardan of Aygek, 13th century) became the most important figures in this field.

Mkhitar Gosh and Prince Smbat the Constable (13th century) were important figures in the field of jurisprudence. Gosh wrote "Girk datastani" ("Corpus Juris") that later was evaluated by Smbat the Constable for the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. Gosh's work was even used in Sudan, Ethiopia, and in the Armenian communities abroad.

We can undoubtedly consider Saint Grigor Narekatsi (Gregory of Narek, 951-1003), an archimandrite of the Armenian Apostolic Church, to be the greatest medieval Armenian poet; he is the author of "Book of Lamentations", a long mystical poem which is the biggest-selling book written by an Armenian medieval author.

Realizing that everyone is sinful, Grigor Narekatsi's main goal was to reach the real human nature by praying, as only God can show us the real way.

Additional information

Grigor Narekatsi is the first Armenian poet to insert non-religious details into poetry; for example, when he describes the Blessed Virgin Mary, we can easily understand that he describes a real lady and human is in the centre of his theological thoughts.

Modern Armenian scholars consider Gregory of Narek to be the founder of the Armenian Renaissance in literature. In comparison, we can see that secular topics began to be discussed by Dante Alighieri and other poets in the European literature only in the 13th century.

The Armenian literature continued its development in Cilicia. For example, Saint Nerses Shnorhali (Nerses the Gracious Pahlavuni), developed the popular genre of riddles. He also wrote theological trades, prayers, and sharagans. Hovhannes Erznkatsi (John of Erznka, 13-14th centuries) was the follower of secular literature in Armenian Cilicia.

There were several notable Armenian poets in the period of nomadic invasions as well. For example, Frik (13-14th centuries) was the major Armenian writer in the period of Mongol rule. Then, Zakaria Aghtamartsi (Zachariah of Aghtamar, 15th century) and Nahapet Kuchak (16th century) were among the popular writers.

Natural sciences: According to the early medieval sources, the natural sciences were carefully explored in Armenia in the 5-7th centuries.

First of all, Elishe tells us about medicine in Armenia stating that doctors carefully treated their patients using their knowledge in anatomy. And what is very interesting, he states that doctors did not pay attention to the patient's wealth, seriously treating each patient.

Secondly, Moses of Khoren, the author of “History of Armenia”, wrote also a geographical book titled “Ashkharhatzuytz” (“World Map”), which carefully describes the geographical area and administrative (political) division of Greater Armenia and Oycumene in the 5th century. According to the book, Greater Armenia had 15 ashkhars (states) that included almost 200 gavars (provinces).

Third, the natural sciences successfully developed in the 7th century when Anania Shirakatsi (Ananias of Shirak) became the major figure of the Armenian science. He supported the ideas of the geoid Earth, gravitation, transgression and regression, etc. For his times, his ideas could have been considered too strange in Europe, while he did not suffer from repressions by Armenian authorities.

Though the natural sciences need stable conditions to succeed, the next centuries had several more scientists; Mkhitar Heratsi (12th century) and Amirdovlat of Amasia (15th century) became very famous for their works in medicine. The latter one even became the royal doctor of the Ottoman Emperor Mehmed II (1444-1446, 1451-1481).

Arts: The Golden Age of the Armenian culture included not only literature, historiography, philosophy, and the natural sciences, but also the arts which had reached a great success even before the Golden Age.

After the adoption of Christianity the first Armenian churches were built; for example, the Holy Cathedral of Saint Etchmiadzin opened the doors on August 15, 303. The archaeological excavations in the mid-1950s made clear that Etchmiadzin Cathedral had a cupola even at the beginning of the 4th century. So, Etchmiadzin Cathedral is the oldest Christian church with cupola in Armenia.

Architecture reached great results in the Medieval Armenia; a number of churches, castles and other constructions have remained standing through ages. As Armenia faced political changes through the Middle Ages, secular constructions (castles, fortifications, palaces, etc.) were

often ruined by foreign invaders. In contrast, a lot of beautiful medieval churches still stand; monasteries of Saint Hripsime (618) and Saint Gayane (631) in Etchmiadzin, Cathedral Church of the Holy Cross (915-921) in Aghtamar, Haghpat and Sanahin (10th century) in Lori, the Cathedral of Ani (1001), Kecharis monastery (11-13th centuries) in Tsakhkadzor, Geghardavank (13th century) next to Garni, are among the most significant medieval Armenian Christian constructions.

A new national form of art developed in Medieval Armenia as people began to create khachkars (cross-stones). The largest number (more than 10 thousand units) of medieval Armenian khachkars existed in Jugha (Julfa, near Nakhijevan), but they were entirely ruined by Azerbaijani authorities in 2005.

Fortunately, there is another beautiful place of medieval Armenian khachkars; hundreds of khachkars are located in the village of Noratus in Gegharkunik region of the Republic of Armenia. In general, Momik (14th century) and Kiram (16-17th centuries) are among the most famous masters of the khachkar art, having made hundreds of khachkars.

Painting got its original sight in the early Medieval Armenia; mosaics transformed to the Christian symbolism and simultaneously, illustrated manuscripts became an essential art in the medieval Armenian book writing.

The largest Armenian mosaic is on the floor of the Armenian Church in Jerusalem (4th century) that covers an area of 150 sq. meters. The medieval Armenian mosaics maintained the essential features of the Hellenistic period and added the dominant characteristics of medieval Christian symbolism.

The most prominent Armenian manuscript illuminators lived in the Cilician Armenia; Toros Roslin (13th century) and Sargis Pitsak (14th century) were the most praised ones. Their works are famous mainly for the brilliant choose of colors and innovative solutions in iconography. Toros

Roslin is also famous for his portraits of the royal family of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia.

Taking into consideration all above mentioned, we can understand that the medieval Armenian culture is the historical evidence of the civilizational development of the Armenian nation. Although Armenia faced various political changes in the Middle Ages, the national culture continued to develop. The main cultural (and also political) achievement of the period was the invention of the Armenian Alphabet which became an instrument to rebuild the system of Armenian national identity, to overcome the geopolitical and cultural changes in the region. Due to these instruments Armenians continued to maintain and develop their own culture both in Armenia and in the foreign countries.

Assignment

Please, answer the following questions (600-900 words in sum).

1. In your opinion, what was the political benefit of the invention of the Armenian alphabet?

2. Do you agree with the concept of the Golden Age of the Armenian culture?

3. How can you describe the evolution of the Armenian culture from the early to the late middle ages?

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NOTE

A lot of other sources in Armenian were used to write this course companion. If a student knows Armenian, he/she can contact to the author to get more materials in Armenian.

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Course companion

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