

The King's Speech: King Levon V's Peacemaking Efforts during the 100 Years' War

King Levon V (1393) is perhaps best known as the last king of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, which played a significant role in the Crusades, intermarrying with European courts and supporting their efforts to liberate the Holy Land. Despite the small religious differences, the Armenians were on good terms with the Western Church and the kingdoms of the west, a small reminder of which is that King Levon's great grandfather, Levon II (Levon the Magnificent, granted a crown by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire on Christmas Day, Jan. 6, 1199), was the best man at Richard the Lionheart's wedding in 1191¹. The Kingdom of Cilicia, borne of the invasions and depredation of the Armenian homeland in the highlands of the north, thrived for over 300 years. However, as the West grew tired of centuries of crusading and succumbed to the Black Plague and internal strife, the Egyptian took their revenge. After the fall of Cilicia in 1375, he took up residence in the court of Charles VI of France, his distant relative, and has the distinction of having been buried in St. Denis Church in Paris, where his memorial shrine can still be found, bearing the inscription.

At this time, King Richard II of England and King Charles VI of France were in Hundred Years' War. The King of Armenia, who had blood ties and amicable relations with both, decide to use his good offices to mediate the conflict. His speech to the court of King Charles VI explaining his mediation strategy and asking authority to mediate from the King, is recorded in the Chronicles of the Monk of St. Denis. He conducted two missions to the English King and was well received to judge by generous gifts the English King bestowed upon him. His second mission in 1392 was cut short, it appears, by ill-health, as he died shortly after returning from England in 1393. The Chronicle reports his intentions and approach and record his speech to the French court. These are, to our knowledge, the only records of the substance of his mediation effort and provide a glimpse into medieval Armenian and European negotiation culture.

¹ Berengaria of Navarre, first-born daughter of King Sancho VI of Navarre. Richard first grew close to her at a tournament held in her native Navarre. The wedding was held in Limassol on 12 May 1191.

Coming soon: Annotated translation of King Levon V's speech and strategy, followed by an analytic observation about his negotiation strategy and style.