

# The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia

by Sirarpie Der Nersessian

## *Chapter XVIII*

from

A History of the Crusades, vol. II

K. M. Setton, Editor-in-Chief

(Philadelphia, 1962)

pp. 630-659\*

Toros I (1100-1129), the son and successor of Constantine, proceeded carefully. He refrained from taking part in the struggle between the Greeks and Latins over the possession of the principal cities of the plain, and captured only Anazarba. He strengthened that city and made it the seat of his barony; he erected a church dedicated to St. George and St. Theodore on the ruined remains of which part of his dedicatory inscription is still visible. He remained on good terms with the Byzantines in spite of the seizure of Anazarba and the plunder and destruction of Heraclea, where he killed the sons of Mandale to avenge the murder of king Gagik. His chief concern, however, was to maintain friendly relations with the Latin princes who had been enlarging their possessions at the expense of the Armenians.

In 1098 Baldwin of Boulogne became master of Edessa, following the murder of Toros by the populace. In 1104 Tatoul of Marash, after successfully resisting the attacks of Bohemond I and his kinsman Richard of the Principate, was forced to cede the city to Joscelin I of Courtenay. Between the years 1115 and 1118 Baldwin of Le Bourg seized the domains of Dgha Vasil and those of [636] Ablgharib, lord of Bira; he imprisoned Constantine of Gargar in the fortress of Samosata, where he died; he captured Ravendan near Cyrrhus, and the territories ruled by Pakrad (8). Thus, with minor exceptions, all the Armenian possessions outside Cilicia passed into Latin hands, and it must have become evident to Toros I that if he wished to remain free and master of his lands, he would have to be careful not to antagonize his powerful and ambitious neighbors.

Therefore, realizing the weakness of his position, he pursued a cautious policy. His land had been plundered by the Moslems in 1107 and again in 1110/1111 when a larger army descended on Anazarba without meeting any resistance. Toros kept aloof also from the battles fought against the Turks in 1112/1113 within his own territories, but in 1118 he took part in the siege and capture of 'Azaz by Roger of Antioch, sending a contingent of troops under the leadership of his brother Leon. Toros gave assistance also to Arab, one

of the sons of Kilij Arslan I, when Arab revolted against his brother Mas'ud. Mas'ud was the son-in-law and ally of Gumushtigin Ghazi, the Danishmendid, which was probably the principal reason for the Danishmendid invasion of Cilicia early in the reign of Leon I (1129-1137). While Gumushtigin Ghazi was invading from the north, Bohemond II of Antioch entered Cilicia from the east. The reasons for the break with Antioch are not known; the anonymous Syrian Chronicle reports that Armenian brigands had been plundering the lands of Gumushtigin Ghazi and that Bohemond had suffered similarly. The two invading armies, unaware of one another's advance, met in the plain north of Mamistra, and Bohemond was killed in the encounter. While the Franks, deprived of their leader, hastily retreated, Leon occupied the passes and killed many of the fugitives. Gumushtigin Ghazi withdrew without pursuing Leon, but returned the following year (1131), seized several forts, and imposed a tribute on the Armenians.

Leon did not long remain inactive. In 1132, taking advantage of the fact that both Gumushtigin Ghazi and the Franks were occupied elsewhere, he seized Mamistra, Adana, and Tarsus, and he followed these conquests in 1135 with the capture of Sarvantikar, a fortress built near the point of convergence of the northern routes that crossed the Amanus. His growing power, and especially the foothold he had gained on the Syrian border, alarmed the Franks; the combined forces of Raymond of Poitiers, the new prince of Antioch, and Baldwin of Marash, with contingents sent by king Fulk of Jerusalem, entered Cilicia. Leon, assisted by his nephew [637] Joscelin II of Edessa, was at first able to withstand their attack, but finally was surprised in an ambush and was taken to Antioch. His captivity lasted only two months. The menace of a Byzantine expedition, directed against Antioch as well as Cilicia, probably hastened his release and, according to Cinnamus, the Latins and Armenians even established some kind of alliance against the Greeks.

As soon as he was set free, Leon rushed to the western borders of Cilicia and laid siege to Seleucia in the vain hope of stopping the Greek advance, but was soon forced to raise the siege. In a rapid march across the plain John Comnenus recovered Tarsus, Adana, Mamistra, and finally Anazarba, Leon's only point of stiff resistance. John also took Tall Hamdun and, without pausing to pursue Leon and his sons, who had fled to the mountains, marched on Antioch. The conquest of Cilicia was completed in the winter of 1137-1138; Vahka fell in spite of its strong position and the prowess of a nobleman called Constantine; the fort of Raban and the surrounding areas were also seized (9). Leon, his wife, and two of his sons, Roupén and Toros, were carried in chains to Constantinople, and Armenian rule in Cilicia seemed destroyed for ever.

Very little is known about internal conditions during the Byzantine occupation. The Greek garrisons do not seem to have been very strong, for even before John's return to Constantinople, while he was besieging Shaizar, the Selchukid Mas'ud had seized and held Adana for a short time, carrying some of its inhabitants as captives to Melitene; and in 1138-1139 the Danishmendid emir Muhammad took Vahka and Gaban and various localities in the region of Garmirler (Red Mountains). But, with the captivity of Leon I,

the center of Armenian resistance was destroyed; the only strong princes who remained in Cilicia, the Hetoumids and their allies, were vassals of Byzantium and always faithful to their suzerain. John crossed Cilicia peacefully at the time of his second expedition to the east (1142). When, after his death and the departure of his son Manuel, Raymond of Antioch captured some of the castles along the Syrian border, the Armenians of that area took no part in the battle, nor did they when the Byzantine forces sent by Manuel defeated Raymond.

However, the situation was soon to change. Leon's younger son, Toros, had been allowed to live at the imperial court after the [638] deaths of his father and his brother Roupen. He was then able to make useful contacts and to escape, probably in 1145. Neither the circumstances of his escape nor those of his arrival in Cilicia are clearly known; legendary and romantic stories distorted the facts and several traditions were already current in the following century. Toros probably came by sea to the principality of Antioch and entered Cilicia secretly. A Jacobite priest, Mar Athanasius, is reported to have led him by night to Amoudain, a castle on the river Pyramus, southeast of Anazarba, and from there he proceeded to the mountainous region which had been the stronghold of his family but which was still held by the Turks. He lived there in disguise, and little by little rallied around him the Armenians of this eastern section of Cilicia. His brother Stephen (Sdefane'), who had been living at the court of his cousin Joscelin II of Edessa, also joined him, and in the course of a few years Toros recovered Vahka, the castles in the vicinity of Anazarba such as Amoudain, Simanagla, and Arioudzpert, and finally Anazarba, the seat of the Roupenid barony. These conquests were probably completed by 1148, the date given by Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus for the beginning of Toros II's reign.

Toros and his small band had fought with great courage and energy, and the general situation in the Levant had favored him. His Latin neighbors had not fully recovered from the destruction of Edessa and the losses suffered during the siege of Antioch; above all, the growing power of Nur-ad-Din forced them to concentrate their efforts on the defense of their own principalities. Joscelin II of Edessa, the most powerful Latin prince of this area, was Toros's friend, and the ties between the two cousins were further strengthened when Toros married the daughter of Simon of Raban, one of Joscelin's vassals.

Toros had also been free from Moslem attacks. The armies of 'Ain-ad-Daulah, Kara Arslan, Mas'ud, and Nur-ad-Din had seized the territories once held by Kogh Vasil, but they did not enter Cilicia. Toros was thus able to strengthen his position. About the year 1151 he took Tall Hamdun and Mamistra, imprisoning the governor, Thomas.

If the immediate neighbors of Cilicia were too busy to interfere with Toros's progress, Byzantium could not allow him to keep the cities still claimed by the empire (10). In 1152 a Byzantine army under [639] the command of Manuel's cousin Andronicus Comnenus, supported by contingents from the Armenian chieftains of western Cilicia,

besieged Mamistra. Toros sallied forth under cover of darkness, routed the Byzantine army, and took many prisoners. Andronicus fled to Antioch and from there returned to Constantinople. Among the prisoners were three of Byzantium's principal Armenian allies: Oshin II of Lampron, Vasil of Partzapert, and Dikran of Bragana; Oshin's brother, Sempad of Babaron, was killed in battle. Oshin was released after he had paid half of a ransom of 40,000 *tahegans* and left his young son Hetoum as hostage. A marriage was negotiated between Hetoum and one of the daughters of Toros, who agreed to forego the remainder of Oshin's ransom, counting it as his daughter's dowry.

Toros II was now master of a large section of the plain. No new expedition was sent to Cilicia; Manuel tried instead an indirect method of defeating Toros. At Manuel's instigation Mas'ud of Iconium invaded Cilicia; he demanded that Taros recognize him as his suzerain and that Toros return to the Greeks the cities he had captured. Taros agreed to do the first, and since this was the only condition which directly interested Mas'ud, he withdrew without further resort to arms. However, after Toros raided Cappadocia in the winter or early spring of 1154, Mas'ud was quite ready to listen to Manuel's renewed request, which was accompanied by costly gifts. The Moslem armies met with severe reverses. Toros's brother Stephen, assisted by the Templars of Baghras (Gaston), surprised the general Ya'qub in the Syrian Gates, killed him, and routed his men. A terrible plague of gnats and flies decimated the Selchukid forces before Tall Hamdun, and the remnants of the army were destroyed by Toros on his return from a raid into enemy territory that had reached as far as Gabadonia (11).

The Byzantine plans had failed once again. Toros established cordial relations with Ma'sud's successor Kilij Arslan II. When Stephen seized Coxon and Pertous, and supported the Christian population of Behesni, who had been aroused by the cruel treatment of their new governor, Toros recovered Pertous by a ruse and returned the city to Kilij Arslan. On his part Kilij Arslan, anxious to rally forces against Nur-ad-Din, made every effort to maintain peace with his Christian neighbors, and even sent ambassadors to Toros, as well as to Antioch and Jerusalem, with the idea of forming an alliance.

Seeing that he could no longer count on the Selchukids, Manuel turned to the Latins; he promised Reginald of Antioch to defray his campaign expenses if he would march against Toros, but once again, Byzantium did not obtain the desired results. For, having seized the castles of the Amanus taken by Toros from the Greeks, Reginald ceded them to the Templars, their previous owners, and when Manuel failed to send the promised sums, Reginald reversed his stand, allied himself with Toros, and the two princes raided Cyprus (1155). Toros remained on good terms with the Latins, and in 1157 took part in the allied attack on Shaizar and Harim.

Byzantium did not immediately react to the plunder of Cyprus; the expedition prepared in great secret a few years later (1158) took Toros and Reginald completely by surprise. Warned by a Latin pilgrim, Toros had barely time to flee to a small castle built on an almost inaccessible crag called Dajig. The Byzantine armies swept through the Cilician

plain without meeting any resistance. Reginald, fearing the emperor's revenge, proceeded to Mamistra dressed in a penitent's garb, and humbled himself before Manuel, promising to remain his vassal and to cede the citadel of Antioch. Shortly thereafter Toros also arrived dressed as a penitent; the Templars and Baldwin III, who in the meantime had come from Jerusalem, interceded for him. Toros promised submission; he presented to the emperor abundant supplies and horses for the army, and received his pardon; Manuel is said even to have bestowed upon him the title *sebastos*.

Cilicia was once again under Byzantine domination. As in the days of Leon I, no sooner had Roupenid control extended into the plain than Byzantium had intervened. But the disaster this time was not complete. Toros II was free, his cavalry was still intact, and he retained his mountain strongholds, for Manuel realized that it was more important to have him in Cilicia, as a vassal who could take part in the fight against the Moslems, than in Constantinople as a captive. We thus see Armenian contingents in the Graeco-Latin expedition against Nur-ad-Din in 1159, and, the following year, among the allied troops led by John Contostephanus against Kilij Arslan.

A break between the Greeks and Armenians, which might have [641] had serious consequences, occurred in 1162. The governor of Tarsus, Andronicus Euphorbenus, invited Stephen to a feast, and when the latter's body was found the next day outside the city gates, Andronicus was accused of the murder. Toros and Mleh immediately took up arms to avenge their brother; they massacred the garrisons of Mamistra, Anazarba, and Vahka. But in the face of the constant Moslem menace it was most important to maintain the alliance between the Christian forces. King Amalric of Jerusalem assumed the role of mediator, as his predecessor had done; Andronicus was recalled and replaced by Constantine Coloman. Nor did Manuel raise any objections the following year when Toros helped the barons of Antioch to install Bohemond III, and to expel Constance, who had appealed for help to Coloman. Toros continued to fight side by side with the Greeks and the Latins. He joined the allied forces against Nur-ad-Din (1164) and he and his brother Mleh were among the few leaders who escaped the disaster of Harim.

We have little information about the internal affairs of Cilicia during this period. The Byzantine occupation had no doubt strengthened the position of their Armenian allies of western Cilicia, but after his return from Harim and perhaps after his successful raid on Marash, when he captured four hundred Turks, Toros felt sufficiently strong to attack Oshin of Lampron. The struggle between the two princes alarmed the catholicus, Gregory III, whose family was allied to the house of Lampron, and he sent his brother, Nerses the Gracious, to bring about a reconciliation (12). It was during this journey to western Cilicia that Nerses met Manuel's kinsman Alexius Axouch at Mamistra; this encounter proved to be the starting point of the negotiations between the Greek and Armenian churches, which were to last several years without success (13).

The see of the catholicus had been transferred in 1151 to Hromgla (Qal'at ar-Rum), a fortified position on the Euphrates north of Bira. Ever since 1125 the head of the

Armenian church had been residing at Dzovk', but his position had become almost untenable after the conquests of Mas'ud and particularly after the capture of Duluk. The catholicus Gregory, seeking refuge elsewhere, had gladly accepted the offer of Hromgla made to him by Beatrice, the wife of Joscelin II of Courtenay, at that time a prisoner of the Turks. Hromgla seems to have been given at first "in trust", but later the [642] catholicus purchased it from Joscelin III for 15,000 *tahegans*; the official deed of transfer was kept in the archives of Hromgla, so that--adds the Cilician Chronicle--no member of the Courtenay family should ever claim the castle.

Toros II had accomplished a remarkable piece of work. He had reestablished the Armenian barony of Cilicia, and, although the territories over which he had control were limited and he was a vassal of the Byzantine emperor, he had laid foundations on which his successors could build. His work was almost undone, however, in the years immediately following his death (1168), by the actions of his brother Mleh, whom, a few years earlier, Toros had expelled from Cilicia. Mleh had gone to the court of Nur-ad-Din and had been appointed governor of Cyrrhus. As soon as news of the death of Toros reached him, he invaded Cilicia with the help of Turkish contingents provided by Nur-ad-Din. A first attempt to seize power there proved unsuccessful, though he took numerous prisoners; he was preparing to return with larger forces when the Armenian nobles ceded the barony to him in order to avoid further bloodshed (14). The regent Thomas fled to Antioch, and Toros's young son Roupen II was carried for safety to Hromgla, where, however, Mleh's agents succeeded in killing him.

From the outset Mleh antagonized the notables and the population by his rapaciousness and his wanton cruelty. His ambition and his confidence in the support of his powerful friend Nur-ad-Din encouraged him to undertake at once the extension of his possessions. Using as a pretext the repudiation by Hetoum of his wife, who was Mleh's niece, he beleaguered Lampron, but in spite of a long siege he was unable to capture this strong position; so he turned to the east and wrested from the Templars the castles of the Amanus. With the help of Turkish forces he seized Adana, Mamistra, and Tarsus (December 1172-January 1173), routed the hastily assembled army of Constantine Coloman, made him a prisoner, and sent him to Nur-ad-Din, together with other prominent captives and much booty. Mleh's growing power disturbed the Latins, already aroused by such acts as the seizure and robbing of count Stephen of Sancerre in 1171, while he was proceeding from Antioch to Constantinople. Mleh's hold over the castles of [643] the Amanus constituted a direct threat to the principality of Antioch. Bohemond III and some of the neighboring barons marched, therefore, against Mleh in the spring of 1173, but apparently were not successful at first (15). When news of the conflict reached Jerusalem, Amalric decided to intervene in person, though he invaded Cilicia only after Mleh had eluded his repeated attempts to meet with him personally. Avoiding the difficult mountainous regions, Amalric advanced through the plain, destroying the villages and setting fire to the crops as he progressed. But Mleh was saved once again by Nur-ad-Din, who created a diversion by marching against Kerak. Amalric hastened back

to Jerusalem; the other Latin forces probably withdrew at the same time, and Mleh remained master of Cilicia.

The death of Nur-ad-Din in May 1174 spelled the end of Mleh's fortunes. When they no longer had reason to fear Nur-ad-Din's intervention, the Armenian nobles rebelled, and killed Mleh in the city of Sis, which had become his residence. They chose as his successor Roupen III (1175-1187), the eldest son of Stephen, who, since his father's death, had been living with his maternal uncle Pagouran, lord of Babaron.

True to the ideas which had guided most of his predecessors, Roupen reverted to the policy of collaboration with the Latins, and he strengthened these ties in 1181 by marrying Isabel, the daughter of Humphrey III of Toron. He had already taken part in the expedition against Harim, and the withdrawal of the Frankish troops before they had attained their goal must have been a bitter disappointment to the Armenians, for whom the Moslems were then the chief enemy. The Turkoman tribes of Anatolia had been crossing the northern borders for some time. Roupen tried to rid his land of these marauding groups; he killed a large number of them, and took many prisoners and considerable booty. Kilij Arslan II complained to Saladin, who, in the fall of 1180, entered Cilicia. He established his camp near Mamistra, made rapid raids in different directions, and withdrew only after Roupen had promised to release the Turkoman prisoners and to return the booty he had taken. Roupen made his peace with Killj Arslan, and we find the two fighting side by side at the time of the revolt of Isaac Comnenus, who, late in 1182, after the seizure of the imperial [644] throne by Andronicus, had returned to Cilicia. It was probably during this period that Roupen recovered Adana and Mamistra, which had once again been taken by the Byzantines. As for Tarsus, still in Greek hands in 1181, it had passed later to Bohemond, who sold it to Roupen in 1183.

The Byzantine forces in Cilicia were now depleted and the moment seemed opportune to Roupen to overthrow their Armenian allies, the rival house of Lampron, to whom Roupen was related through his mother. Hard pressed by Roupen's siege and no longer able to count on Byzantine help, Hetoum of Lampron appealed to Bohemond III. Officially Roupen and the prince of Antioch were allies, but Bohemond resented the cordial welcome extended by Roupen to the Antiochene barons who had disapproved of his marriage to Sibyl and had fled to Cilicia. Moreover, any increase of Roupenid power was always viewed with suspicion by the princes of Antioch. Under cover of friendship Bohemond invited Roupen to a banquet and, after imprisoning him, invaded Cilicia. However, Bohemond was able neither to relieve Lampron, nor to capture a single town or castle, for Leon, to whom Roupen, his brother, had succeeded in sending a message, and other Armenian barons, valiantly continued to fight (16). Seeing that his efforts were fruitless, Bohemond, having kept Roupen prisoner for a year, decided to release him. Pagouran of Babaron, related both to the Hetoumids and to Roupen, acted as intermediary; he sent several hostages including his own sister Rita, Roupen's mother. Roupen promised to pay a ransom of 1,000 *tahegans* and to cede the castles of Sarvantikar and Tall Hamdun, as well as Mamistra and Adana. But soon after the ransom

had been paid and the hostages had been returned, he reconquered all that he had ceded, and Bohemond was not in a position to retaliate beyond making a few ineffectual raids.

The barony was thus in a strong position when Roupen III transferred the power to his brother Leon II (1187) and retired to the monastery of Trazarg. The menace of the recent alliance between Isaac Angelus and Saladin, and the more immediate threat of the Turkomans, led to a rapprochement between Leon and Bohemond. Large bands of these nomads had again been crossing the northern borders, advancing almost as far as Sis and laying waste on all sides. Leon could muster only a small force, but he attacked them with such energy that he routed the bands, killed their leader Rustam, and pursued the fugitives as far as Sarvantikar, [645] inflicting heavy losses on them. The following year (1188) taking advantage of the troubled condition in the sultanate of Rum that preceded the death of Kilij Arslan II, Leon turned against the Selchukids. A surprise attack on Bragana was unsuccessful, and the constable Baldwin was killed, but Leon returned two months later with a larger army, killed the head of the garrison, seized the fortress, and marched into Isauria. Though we find no specific mention of it, Seleucia must have been captured about this time, for the city was in Armenian hands when Frederick Barbarossa came in 1190. Proceeding northward, Leon seized Heraclea, gave it up after payment to him of a large sum, and advanced as far as Caesarea. It is probably about this time that Shahnshah, brother of Hetoum of Lampron, took, on behalf of Leon, the fortress of Loulon, covering the northern approach to the Cilician Gates, and fortified it (17).